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WORKS

OF THE

RIGHT REV. BISHOP HAY

WORKS

OF THE

RIGHT REV. BISHOP HAY

OF EDINBURGH

IN FIVE VOLUMES

VOL. III.

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THE RIGHT REV. BISHOP STRAIN

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THE

DEVOUT CHRISTIAN

INSTRUCTED IN

THE LAW OF CHRIST, ETC.

INTRODUCTION.

THE great commendation given by God Himself of His servant Job was, that he "was a simple and upright man, one that feared God, and avoided evil," Job, i. 8; and we find throughout the whole Scripture that nothing recommends a soul more to the favour of God than simplicity and sincerity of heart in seeking Him; and that nothing is more detestable to Him than a double-minded man, who walketh not sincerely in His sight. Thus we are assured by the wise man that "a perverse heart is abominable to the Lord, and His will is in them that walk sincerely," Prov. xi. 20; that "dissemblers and crafty men provoke the wrath of God," Job, xxxvi. 13; that "the simplicity of the just shall guide them, and the deceitfulness of the wicked shall destroy them," Prov. xi. 3; and that "the justice of the upright shall make his way prosperous, and the wicked man shall fall by his own wickedness," Prov. xi. 5.

Hence we are commanded to "think of the Lord in goodness, and seek Him in simplicity of heart," Wis. i. 1; but "be not incredulous," says the Holy Ghost, "to the fear of the Lord; and come not to Him with a double heart," Ecclus. i. 36; for "woe to them that are of a double heart, . . . and to the sinner that goeth on the earth two ways," Ecclus. ii. 14. Such a one cannot expect to obtain any favour from God, or that His Holy Spirit will enlighten and direct him. "Wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, and . . . the holy spirit of discipline will fly from the deceitful," Wis. i. 4; and our blessed Saviour Himself assures us that His heavenly Father hides the secrets of His Divine wisdom from "the wise and prudent, and reveals them to little ones," Mat. xi. 25—that is, to those who apply to Him with a simple and sincere heart, such as is found in little children.

There is no case wherein we stand in greater need of this Divine wisdom to guide us, and consequently wherein a sincere and upright heart with God is more necessary to succeed in obtaining it, than when we are in search of the true religion. When we consider the numberless conflicting sects into which Christianity is divided in these countries,—when we see one condemning what another approves, and approving what he as heartily condemns—some embracing certain articles as Divine truths revealed by God, and others rejecting them with horror as the doctrine of devils,—common-sense must convince us, if we allow ourselves to think, that it is absolutely impossible all parties can be right. Contradictory creeds cannot be from God; and consequently, if the faith of one party be from God, and therefore true, the belief of the opposing sects must be false, the offspring of Satan, the father of lies and falsehood. Our heart shudders at the thought of belonging to any such sect as

this, however its members may assume the specious name of Christians.

The whole tenor of the Scripture points out only *one* true faith, without which "it is impossible to please God," Heb. vi.—*one* spouse of Jesus Christ, *one* house of God, *one* true Church, to which "the Lord daily adds all that are to be saved," Acts, ii. But, on the other hand, we see among those who call themselves Christians numbers of conflicting sects, and each one claiming to be the true Church of Christ, asserting that the doctrine it professes is the one true faith revealed by Him. Amidst such a confusion of opinions, the mind is bewildered, perplexed, and uncertain how to discover that one true Church in which the truth is to be found.

It is in making this search that sincerity and uprightness of heart before God are essentially necessary. The difficulties attending this search are immense; the prejudices of education, the favour of friends, the fear of what the world will say, and worldly interest, will all be employed by the enemy of our souls, to blind the understanding that it may not see the truth, and to prevent the will from embracing it. Nothing but a particular grace from heaven can enlighten the mind to perceive the light through such clouds of darkness, and fortify the soul with courage to embrace it in spite of all these difficulties.

It is, without doubt, the will of God that "all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth," 1 Tim. ii. 4; but it is also His holy will that in order to come to this knowledge we must seek it with those dispositions of a sincere and upright heart, without which, as we have seen above, we can never hope to obtain it. Now this sincerity of heart must show itself—(1.) In *an earnest desire to know the truth;* for "The beginning of

wisdom is the most true desire of discipline," Wis. vi. 18; and "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled," Mat. v. 6. (2.) *In a firm resolution to embrace this heavenly wisdom*, this knowledge of the Divine truth of Jesus Christ, wherever it shall be found, and whatever it may cost us—preferring it before every worldly consideration, and ready to forfeit everything in this life, rather than deprive our souls of so great a treasure. Thus the wise man, when God discovered His heavenly wisdom to him, says, "I preferred her before kingdoms and thrones, and esteemed riches nothing in comparison of her; neither did I compare to her any precious stone, for all gold in comparison of her is as a little sand, and silver in respect to her shall be counted as clay; I loved her above health and beauty, and chose to have her instead of light," Wis. vii. 8. So also St Paul says, "What things were gain to me, those I have counted loss for Christ; furthermore, I count all things to be but loss, for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord," Philip. iii. 7. (3.) *In fervent and frequent prayer to God to discover His truth to us*, and lead us into the right way: "If any of you want wisdom, let him ask it of God, Who giveth to all abundantly, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him," James, i. 5. "Wherefore I wished," says the wise man, "and understanding was given me: and I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came upon me," Wis. vii. 7. (4.) *In labouring diligently to find out the truth*, using every means in our power for that purpose; for "If thou shalt call for wisdom, and incline thy heart to prudence, if thou shalt seek her as money, and dig for her as a treasure; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and shalt find the knowledge of God: because the Lord giveth wisdom, and out of His mouth cometh prudence and knowledge; He will

keep the salvation of the righteous, and protect them that walk in simplicity," Prov. ii. 3.

Faith is the gift of God; "for by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, for it is the gift of God," Eph. ii. 8. It is God alone Who by His grace can enlighten the understanding to know His holy faith, and fortify the heart against all difficulties in embracing it; and these graces He will never refuse to those who seek the truth with a sincere heart, and use their best endeavours to discover it. It was in order to assist such in this important search that I published *The Sincere Christian instructed in the Faith of Christ.* In it I have endeavoured to facilitate their progress towards the true faith by pointing out the only sure way which can conduct them to it, explaining in an easy and familiar manner the necessary articles of Christian faith, the knowledge and belief of which are required to constitute a well-instructed Christian. But though a sincere Christian, by the aid of these instructions and the blessing of Heaven, may find the object of his search, and obtain the light of the true faith of Christ, as the reward of his sincerity, he must not flatter himself that his work is done and his salvation secure. The sincerity of his heart in searching for it must be followed by devotion in practising what it teaches. The infinite goodness of God in crowning his endeavours with success, by "calling him out of darkness into His admirable light," 1 Pet. ii. 9, demands the most cordial acknowledgment of gratitude and love. The singular grace he has received in being brought to the knowledge of the truth, the first step in the road to salvation, whilst it is a convincing proof of God's desire to bring him to a happy eternity, lays him under the strictest obligation to dedicate himself to the service of so good a God, and to co-operate to

the utmost of his power with His Divine will, in order to complete the work so happily begun. Now this can be accomplished only by a continual obedience to the commands of God, both in abstaining from everything evil, and in practising those works of piety, justice, and charity which His law requires.

It is a fatal error, adopted in belief by some, but by many more in practice, that faith alone, without works, can bring us to salvation. This is indeed a deplorable but convincing proof of the excess of blindness to which the heart of man is liable in matters of religion, when deprived of that light which Divine Providence has given us. It seems scarcely possible for a reasonable creature, having the knowledge of right and wrong within his breast, seriously to persuade himself that a God of infinite purity and holiness could ever admit to His chaste embraces, and to the eternal enjoyment of His Divine presence, a rebel to His law, a soul sullied with crimes, merely because he pretended to believe in Him; and if we open the Holy Scripture, we find almost in every page such convincing proofs of the necessity of innocence of life, and of the practice of good works, in order to be saved, that one must wilfully shut his eyes against the light not to see them.

In these holy writings we are told that faith unaccompanied by good works is dead, which in the sight of God is the same as none, or rather worse than no faith. Now the difference between a dead and a living faith is as great as between a dead and a living person. When we see a man who has all the ordinary signs of life, whose pulse beats, whose lungs breathe, and who performs vital actions as other men, we pronounce him a living being. But if none of these signs appear—if he is incapable of all the acts of life—without hesitation we pronounce him a

corpse, a dead man. We know that where life is, it must produce some or other of the effects proper to itself; and therefore we conclude that where none of them are found, life is no longer there. In like manner faith, which is an active principle, never fails, when alive, to manifest certain signs in our whole conduct.

To understand what are the signs of a living faith, and the effects which it produces, we must observe that two things chiefly excite man to action, or restrain him from it,—duty and interest. When we are convinced that it is our duty to do, or to avoid doing, anything proposed, that we are bound to either by justice, charity, gratitude, or honour, this conviction never fails, if we be well-disposed, to impel us powerfully to do what duty requires, and to avoid what it forbids. I say, *if we be well-disposed;* because it but too often happens that our hearts, vitiated by evil habits, violent passions, or sordid affections, act in direct opposition even to known duty in order to gratify their selfish inclinations. Still, such is the power of the sense of duty, that even when we act in opposition to it we are stung by remorse, and stand self-condemned at the bar of our own conscience; and should it happen, as it sometimes may, that our selfish views are gratified in acting according to our duty, yet if it should be asked what were the motives of our conduct, we would be ashamed to acknowledge self-gratification as such. We desire others to think that only a sense of duty actuated us. Instances of the power of a lively sense of duty, and of the desire we have to be thought to act from it, are to be found in every state of life,—in the obedience of children to their parents, of servants to their masters, and of soldiers to their leaders; in our acts of justice, humanity, or charity, and in the service we render to our country, or to the

more limited society of which we are members. In these and similar cases the motives by which we pretend to act, and by which we always desire others to think us influenced, is a sense of the duty required by the particular relations in which we stand.

The other motive which operates upon the mind of men is interest, and its mighty influence in our breasts is well known, whether it presents itself under the view of procuring us some advantage, as pleasure, gain, honour, or of preserving us from a contrary evil. No sooner does anything appear in this light than we feel ourselves strongly inclined to pursue or avoid it, as the case may be. What is it that impels us to drink bitter potions, or to undergo a painful amputation, but the persuasion that the recovery of health or the preservation of life requires it? But who would be persuaded for any worldly consideration to throw himself over a rugged precipice, or drink a cup of deadly poison?

Now, if these motives be so strong when single, they must be all-powerful when united in any matter of importance; for when we are persuaded that it is both our strict duty and at the same time our highest interest to do or not to do anything proposed, we feel it impossible to resist the force of this combined influence. If in any case we do resist, it is owing to our ignorance of the motives, or to our not adverting to them.

Now, our holy faith assures us that it is man's bounden duty to obey the commands of God; that God, as our Creator and Redeemer, has absolute dominion over us, and the most undoubted claim to our service and obedience. He is the author and source of all the good we either enjoy or expect, and justly deserves from us every possible return of gratitude and love. As Chris-

tians we are still more bound to serve Him by the solemn dedication of our baptism; and consequently we are guilty of the highest injustice, the deepest ingratitude, and the blackest perfidy, if we offend and disobey Him.

The same holy faith also assures us, on the authority of God Himself, that it is our highest, our only true interest, to serve and obey Him to the utmost of our power; that our supreme happiness, both in this life and in the life to come, depends upon our doing so. Hence it is evident that if we believe these great truths, if we have a lively faith and feeling sense of them, they must necessarily lead us to regulate our actions by their light, to live a life of piety and virtue, to love and serve God, to obey His holy commands, and diligently to avoid everything that can offend Him. This is what God Himself declares: "He that believeth God taketh heed to the commandments," Ecclus. xxxii. 28; in which words He joins our *believing God*—that is, having a true and lively faith in Him, and in the great truths He has revealed—and our *obedience to the commands*, as two things connected,—the latter being a natural and necessary consequence of the former. In like manner He also says, "In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin," Ecclus. vii. 40. This frequent remembrance of our last end—that is, of the great truths of eternity which our holy faith teaches — is both the principal means to enliven our faith in these truths, and at the same time the constant attendant on a lively belief of them; and God Himself assures us that this will prove the most powerful means to preserve us from sin. Hence the Scripture declares that "the just man lives by faith" —that is, the light of faith is the principle of that spiritual life by which he lives to God. All his actions are the

fruits of that faith, and regulated by its light; all his designs are directed, all his works guided by it: he fears nothing but what faith teaches him to fear, desires nothing but what faith tells him he ought to desire, loves nothing but what this Divine light teaches him to love, hopes for nothing but what it tells him he ought to hope for, and hates nothing but what it points out as deserving of his hatred. These are the effects which a lively faith produces in the soul—the natural signs of that living faith by which the just man lives to God.

If we examine our own hearts we shall see how powerful is the influence of the truths of faith, when we have a proper sense of them; for when we fast, pray, or chastise our body with St Paul, mortify our passions, deny ourselves, or perform any other act of Christian virtue, what is it that moves us? These things are all contrary to the natural inclinations of flesh and blood, even painful to our corrupt nature. Why then do we perform them? Faith is the spring from which all such actions flow; we are moved to do them because we firmly believe what our faith teaches, that this is both our duty and our highest interest. If, therefore, a life of piety and obedience to the commands of God be the natural effect which a lively faith produces in our conduct, where faith gives none of these signs of life, produces none of the effects which are proper to its vitality, and still more if it does not deter us from sin, which is directly opposed to its light, we must conclude that it is dead, a mere phantom, and far from that faith by which we live to God. This is indeed the very conclusion which St James draws from a long train of reasoning: "Even so faith, if it has not works, is dead in itself," James, ii. 17; "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also," ver. 26. Now, such a dead faith as this is the same

in the sight of God as no faith, as St James declares when he challenges us to give proof of our having any faith at all, if we have not works along with it: "Show me," says he, "thy faith without works, and I will show thee my faith by works," James, ii. 18. Nay, such a dead faith is worse than none; it is an object of abomination before God, as is attested by St Paul, who says, "They profess that they know God, but in their works they deny Him, being abominable and incredulous, and to every good work reprobate," Tit. i. 16.

Now, can any man imagine that such a dead faith will bring any one to heaven? The whole tenor of Scripture gives the clearest contradiction to such a supposition. "What shall it profit," says St James with surprise, "if a man say he hath faith, but hath not works? shall faith be able to save him?" ii. 14. No; he assures us, and confirms his conclusion by a striking example: "If a brother or sister be naked, and want daily bread, and one among you say to him, Go in peace, be you warmed and filled, yet give him not those things that are necessary for the body, what shall it profit?" Will your saying so be of any profit to your brother in distress? or will your good wishes to him be of any profit to yourself, while you refuse to supply his wants? Certainly not; neither will your faith be of any use to you without good works. Nay, he says more: "You believe there is one God; you do well: but the devils believe" this as well as you; yea, they do more, *they tremble* through this their belief: but as this faith alone will never be able to deliver them from their misery, or bring them to heaven, so neither will your faith, if it go no farther than theirs, save you. Finally, the holy apostle brings the example of Abraham and others, and then concludes:

"Do you see that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only?" James, ii. 24.

St Paul is no less clear on this head, assuring us in express terms that nothing will avail us in Christ, nothing gain us a saving interest in Him, but a lively faith—a faith animated by charity, and productive of good works. "In Christ Jesus," says he, "neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith that worketh by charity," Gal. v. 6. Charity is to faith what the soul is to the body; it animates faith, gives it life, vigour, action; and therefore, to show us that a dead faith unaccompanied with good works will never bring us to heaven, the Holy Ghost declares by these words of the apostle that the only thing that can avail us in Christ is a living faith, animated by charity, and producing good works. What these good works are our Saviour Himself tells, when explaining the substance of charity to be the love of God He says, "If you love Me keep My commandments," John, xiv. 15; and "he that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loves Me," John, xiv. 21; and therefore in another place He makes the keeping of the commandments an express condition of obtaining eternal life: "If thou wilt enter into life," says he, "keep the commandments," Mat. xix. 17. And indeed, as it is impossible to be saved without loving God, and as the very essence of this love consists in keeping His commandments, it manifestly follows, that a mere dead faith without love and obedience will never bring us to salvation; and therefore St Paul puts this very case of having faith without charity, and declares its insufficiency in these words: "If I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing," 1 Cor. xiii. 2.

Besides, does not Christ Himself assure us that the

sentence of eternal reprobation will be passed upon the wicked at the last day, precisely for their want of good works? for immediately after that dreadful sentence He adds, as the cause of passing it, "For I was hungry, and ye gave Me no meat," &c. He does not condemn them for not believing, or for embracing a false faith; but because having true faith in Him, and believing the very truths He had revealed, they took no care to animate and enliven their faith by charity, or to accompany it by good works. Nay, upon another occasion, speaking of the same great day of account, He says, "In that day many shall say unto Me, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and cast out devils in Thy name, and done many wonderful works in Thy name?" Here we see not only a true but a strong faith — a faith even capable of working miracles—and this faith, and the miracles wrought in virtue of it, made use of by those who had it as a recommendation to mercy and favour with the great Judge; and yet, because it was not attended with good works, was not enlivened by charity, did not produce obedience to the commandments, it was so far from being of service to them, that our Saviour immediately adds, "Then will I profess to them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity," Mat. vii. 22. So true is that declaration of St Paul, "If I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." And therefore Christ declares in express terms, "Not every one that saith to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he who doth the will of My Father Who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven," Mat. vii. 21. And was not the unprofitable servant condemned precisely for not improving his talent? and the barren tree cut

down and cast into the fire because it brought not forth good fruit? Does not St Paul assure us that "Jesus Christ is become the cause of eternal salvation to all that obey Him"? Heb. v. 9. And do we not find throughout the whole Scripture eternal life and happiness everywhere proposed as the reward of good works? and on the contrary, wrath and indignation as the portion of those who obey not the commands? It were endless to cite all the different texts where these truths are declared, as they are to be found in almost every page of Scripture. —See Rom. ii. 9; Rev. ii. 26, iii. 21, xiv. 13; Gal. v. 19; Eph. v. 5; 1 Cor. vi. 9; Rev. xxi. 8.

We must conclude, therefore, that though the true faith of Christ, the firm belief of those sacred truths of eternity which He revealed to the world, be absolutely necessary, it is not sufficient for salvation. Faith is the first step to eternal life, the foundation upon which all Christian perfection rests, the root from which every other virtue springs, insomuch that no Christian virtue can exist unless grounded upon the true faith of Christ, and rising from that root, any more than a house can stand in the air without foundation, or a tree grow on the surface of the earth without a root. Still, though true faith in Christ and in His Divine truths be so strictly required by Almighty God, that without it nothing can be acceptable to Him—for He expressly declares that "without faith it is impossible to please God," Heb. xi. 6—yet this Divine faith, though of such absolute necessity, will never *alone* bring a soul to heaven, unless it be productive of good works in obedience to the commandments of God, unless it be a living faith—"a faith that worketh by charity."

But why do I say that faith will not save us without good works? Instead of saving or being of any service to

us, it will prove in the end our greatest adversary, and bring upon us a more dreadful condemnation. When the soul of a bad Christian is presented before the tribunal of Jesus Christ, her faith which lay dormant during her mortal life will then rise up against her, and, to her incredible confusion, will present before her eyes, in the most lively colours, how fully she had had it in her power to have lived a good life, and to have secured her eternal salvation; how well she had known what God required of her, what abundant helps she had had; how strong had been her obligation to serve God, and how great her madness and folly in not complying with it. From all this she will see that since "she knew so well her Master's will, and did it not, she has nothing to expect but to be beaten with many stripes;" since so many talents were bestowed upon her which she did not improve, she can expect only the fate of the unprofitable servant, to "be cast into utter darkness, where there is nothing but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth;" and since Almighty God gave her so many graces which she abused, so much time for repentance which she neglected, nothing remains for her but "to be thrown into the pool burning with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Seeing, therefore, that the practice of good works, the works of virtue and piety, by obedience to the commands of God, is so necessary for securing our salvation, the sincere Christian, who has found the object of his wishes, and come to the knowledge of the true faith of Christ, must not flatter himself that the work is complete, and that becoming a member of the Church of Christ will alone suffice to bring him to the enjoyment of Christ. Only a part of the work is done, and that the smaller part. From a sincere Christian inquiring for the truth, now that he has found it, he must become a devout

Christian in practising it; otherwise he will never obtain the wished-for crown of immortality. The infinite goodness of Almighty God in bringing him out of darkness to His admirable light, in preference to so many others, strictly demands a return of gratitude and love, the great proof of which is obedience to the Divine commandments. Wherefore the sincere Christian, brought to the truth, and become a member of the Church of Christ, must consider as addressed to himself in particular, those admonitions which St Peter and St Paul gave to their lately-converted disciples, and in them to all who are called to the Christian faith: "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for what things a man shall sow, these also shall he reap. For he that soweth in the flesh, of the flesh also shall reap corruption; but he that soweth in the spirit, of the spirit shall reap life everlasting. And in doing good let us not fail, for in due time we shall reap, not failing. Therefore, whilst we have time, let us do good to all men," Gal. vi. 9. "You were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord. Walk ye as the children of light: for the fruit of the light is in all goodness, and justice, and truth; proving what is well-pleasing to God: and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness," Eph. v. 8. "By Christ, God hath given us most great and precious promises; that by these you may be made partakers of the Divine nature, flying the corruption of that concupiscence which is in the world. And you, giving all diligence, join with your faith virtue; and with virtue knowledge; and with knowledge abstinence; and with abstinence patience; and with patience goodness; and with goodness brotherly love; and with brotherly love charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they will make you to be neither empty nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For he that hath not these things with him, is blind and groping, forgetting his being purged from his old sins. Wherefore, brethren, labour the more, that by good works you may make your calling and election sure; for doing these things you shall not sin at any time; and so an entrance shall be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," 2 Pet. i. 4-11.

In the former part of this work I endeavoured to conduct the sincere Christian seeking the truth, from the first principles of Christianity to the full knowledge of the Church of Christ, in which alone His holy faith is to be found, explaining to him all those truths of that Divine faith which it is necessary for him to know in order to be a well-instructed Christian. The design of this present work is to instruct the *Devout Christian*, who having found and embraced the true faith, is now firmly resolved to practise it. It has been my particular care to be plain and clear, that what I advance may be suited to all capacities. I have studied to avoid all peculiar opinions on any moral duty, endeavouring to adhere closely to the clear and simple decisions of God's Holy Word. With this view I have omitted various human arguments, which might justly have been used to confirm and enforce the obligation of certain moral duties. I have even, as far as possible, given the answers to the questions proposed in the very words of Scripture, or in terms equivalent, evidently contained in the texts adduced to prove them. Indeed, my principal intention was, that these instructions on the law of Christ should be, as the title bears, *from the written Word*, because proofs of such authority admit of no evasion. *God has said it!* and who will dare to deny it? Proofs of this kind are the most persuasive

to a sincere Christian; and I have found by experience that instructions drawn from this sacred source, and illustrated by a proper selection of Scripture proofs, are both the most heart-touching and the most fruitful in their effects. Perhaps those who have to give such instructions may derive some assistance from this work; at least, if they choose to follow this method, they will be spared the trouble of collecting Scripture testimonies on the chief duties of Christian morality, as they will find them here collected to their hand. I only beg the reader not to pass over slightly what is here contained. The subject is important; it deserves deep consideration. Let him ponder well and meditate on the great truths here laid down; let him remember, as he peruses the sacred testimonies here collected, that it is God who speaks in them, that they are Divine eternal truths, that no human reason can invalidate them, that heaven and earth shall pass away, but His word shall never pass away; and that, therefore, all the suggestions of flesh and blood, all the evasions of self-love, are to be rejected and condemned as false and deceitful guides, when they oppose themselves to this heavenly light. But, above all, let him make it his constant endeavour to regulate his life and conduct by these Divine laws, which alone will bring him to eternal happiness, "for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified," Rom. ii. 13.

THE

DEVOUT CHRISTIAN

INSTRUCTED IN

THE LAW OF CHRIST, ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE LAW OF GOD IN GENERAL.

Q. 1. WHAT is the law of God?

A. It is the manifestation of His will to man, declaring what He requires man to do and to avoid, in order to please God and save His own soul.

Q. 2. Where is this manifestation of the will of God to be found?

A. In the Ten Commandments, which are an abridgment of all that we have to do, as the Creed is an abridgment of all we have to believe, and the Lord's Prayer an abridgment of what we have to ask of God, in order to be saved.

Q. 3. When did God manifest His will to man in the Ten Commandments?

A. After He had brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, and conducted them through the Red Sea into

the wilderness, He there appeared to the whole people in a most awful manner, and with His own mouth promulgated, in the hearing of the whole multitude, the Ten Commandments; and He afterwards wrote them with His own finger on two tables of stone, and gave them to Moses to be preserved in the ark, as the continual rule of our actions.

Q. 4. What account does the Scripture give of this awful scene?

A. It is thus described in the Book of Exodus, chap. xix. 10: "And God said to Moses: Go to the people, and sanctify them to-day and to-morrow, and let them wash their garments. And let them be ready against the third day; for on the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai. And thou shalt appoint certain limits to the people round about, and thou shalt say to them: Take heed ye go not up into the mount, and that ye touch not the borders thereof: every one that toucheth the mount, dying he shall die. No hands shall touch him, but he shall be stoned to death, or shall be shot through with arrows; whether it be beast or man, he shall not live. And Moses came down from the mount to the people, and sanctified them. And when they had washed their garments, he said to them: Be ready against the third day, and come not near your wives. And now the third day was come, and the morning appeared; and behold thunders began to be heard, and lightning to flash, and a very thick cloud to cover the mount, and the noise of the trumpet sounded exceeding loud, and the people that was in the camp feared. . . . And all Mount Sinai was on a smoke, because the Lord was come down upon it in fire, and the smoke rose from it as out of a furnace: and all the mount was terrible. And the

sound of the trumpet grew by degrees louder and louder, and was drawn out to a greater length." Now from the midst of this dread commotion of the elements the voice of God was heard by the whole people, while He pronounced to them His law, saying,

"I am the Lord thy God, Who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no strange gods before me. Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, nor of those things that are in the waters under the earth. Thou shalt not adore them, nor serve them: I am the Lord thy God, mighty and jealous, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, to the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me, and showing mercy to thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments.

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that shall take the name of the Lord his God in vain.

"Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath-day; six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: on it thou shalt do no manner of work; thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy beast, nor the stranger that is within thy gate; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them, and rested on the seventh day, therefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.

"Honour thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest be long-lived upon the land which the Lord thy God will give thee.

"Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adul-

tery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house. Neither shalt thou covet his wife, nor his servant, nor his handmaid, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is his"—Exod. xx. 1-17.

Q. 5. Why did God proclaim his law in so tremendous a manner?

A. For several reasons. 1. To give credit and authority to Moses, and to convince the world that he was sent by God: thus God says to Moses, "Lo, now I will come to thee in the darkness of a cloud, that the people may hear Me speaking to thee, and may believe thee for ever," Exod. xix. 9. 2. To teach us with what profound reverence we ought always to receive instructions on the laws of God, and hear His word, which appears, from the preparation He required of His people, to fit them for receiving His law, and the distance He obliged them to keep from the mountain while it was being given to them. (3.) To fill our minds with the wholesome fear of God, considering how great and awful a Being He is; and, (4.) To make us careful in obeying His commands; for, when "all the people saw the voices and the flames, and the sound of the trumpet, and the mount smoking, being terrified and struck with fear, they stood afar off, saying to Moses, Speak thou unto us, and we will hear; let not the Lord speak to us, lest we die. And Moses said to the people, Fear not, for God is come to prove you, and that the dread of Him might be in you, and you should not sin," Exod. xx. 18-20.

Q. 6. Why did God begin the declaration of His law by these words, "I am the Lord thy God, Who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage"?

A. To impress upon our hearts a just sense of the infinite power, dominion, authority, and majesty of our Divine Lawgiver, who is "the Lord our God," a being of infinite perfections, who has an unlimited power, and the most absolute dominion over us and all creatures, who can do with us whatever He pleases, and who alone can defend us from dangers, deliver us from evils, and bestow upon us all good for time and eternity; and from this consideration to make us receive His law with greater respect, and observe it with due fidelity.

Q. 7. Why does God add to the first command these words, "for I am the Lord thy God, strong and jealous, visiting"? &c.

A. To impress us with a just sense of His infinite power and severity as our Judge, and of His ardent zeal for the faithful observance of His law, assuring us that He will most undoubtedly punish all who transgress it, and amply reward those who obey it.

Q. 8. Is this law of God, as contained in the Ten Commandments, a new law?

A. No; it is the same law that God, in creating man, imprinted on his mind by the light of reason; for except the single article determining the seventh day of the week to be set apart for the service of God, the Ten Commandments contain nothing beyond the natural duties of man to God and to his neighbour, the knowledge of which God has imprinted on our heart by the light of nature. Had man continued in the state of innocence, this would have been a full and sufficient rule to guide and direct him in his conduct. But the heart of man, corrupted by sin, gave not proper attention to this light, which in process of time became so darkened and obscured, by the repetition of sin, as to

seem almost lost. God of His infinite mercy was pleased to give His chosen people an external renewal of this Divine law in the Ten Commandments, in order to preserve them from the general corruption of mankind. In so doing He manifested His special love and predilection for that people, the posterity of His servant Abraham; wherefore the royal prophet exhorts them to be grateful to God, and to thank and praise Him for such a distinguished mercy. "Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion, . . . Who hath declared His word to Jacob, His justice and His judgments to Israel. He hath not done in like manner to every nation, and His judgments He hath not made manifest to them," Ps. cxlvii. 1, 19.

Q. 9. Are we Christians obliged to obey the Ten Commands given to the Jews?

A. Most undoubtedly; because though the ceremonial law given to the Jews, and what regarded their policy and forms of judgment, being intended only for their nation, and a figure of the good things then to come, was wholly abrogated when the Gospel appeared, and the Jews ceased to be a nation, yet the Ten Commands, excepting the determination of the seventh day, being only an external declaration of the eternal law of God, can never be abrogated, can never cease to be binding upon every human creature. Hence our blessed Saviour makes the observance of them an absolute condition of salvation. "If thou wilt enter into life," says He, "keep the commandments," Mat. xix. 17; Luke, xviii. 20; and this He declared in answer to the question expressly put to Him by the young man, "What must I do to possess eternal life?" And whereas the Jews, blinded by their passions and carnal views, had put false glosses and explanations on several of the com-

mandments, He was pleased, in His Divine Sermon on the Mount, to correct these false interpretations, and explain the true sense and meaning of these commands, declaring, at the same time, the absolute obligation under which we are of observing them, and assuring us that He was "come not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it," Mat. v. 17; and to show us the permanency and indefectibility of His Divine law, He immediately adds, with His usual asseveration, "Amen, I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall not pass of the law, till all be fulfilled," ver. 18.

Q. 10. How great is our obligation to obey the law of God?

A. Besides what we have seen at large in the introduction, we must further observe, that obedience to the law of God is the very end of our being, the end which God had in creating us: "Let us all hear together," says Solomon, "the conclusion of the discourse: Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is all man," Eccles. xii. 13;—that is, this is everything to man; this is the whole business and duty of man; this is all he has to do in this world; in a word, his perfection, his happiness, his all: for as the sun was created to give light, and the fire to give heat, the water to refresh, and the air to animate the earth to produce its fruits, and these fruits to nourish man; so man himself was created to fear God, and keep His commandments. These creatures become monsters and useless when they cease to fulfil the end for which God created them; and man is no less so when he disobeys the commands of God. Whatever he does without this is nothing, for "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God," 1 Cor. vii. 19; and, in

reality, what are the commands of God, but the manifestation of His will to man? Now, as every man justly expects and requires his will to be obeyed by those under his authority, how much more justly does God require obedience from us over whom He has the most absolute dominion and authority?

Q. 11. In what manner ought we to obey the commandments?

A. We must obey them in the manner which Jesus Christ requires; not according to the false explanations of the Jews, nor after the example of the Pharisees, but according to the true interpretation which Jesus Christ has given us of them, and with that perfection which He points out in the Gospel.

Q. 12. In what does this perfection of our obedience to the law consist?

A. Our Saviour uses a remarkable expression in the Gospel, which will explain this to us. "I tell you, except your justice exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," Mat. v. 20. The Scribes were the doctors of the law; and the Pharisees were a sect of men making profession of a more than ordinary exact observance of the law, and on that account were greatly esteemed among the people: and it must be owned that, in some respects, their conduct does seem a reproach to Christians. They abhorred blasphemy and profanation of the name of God; they had a horror of uncleanness; they observed the Sabbath-day with scrupulous exactness; they made open profession of piety; they fasted frequently, and were charitable to the poor. Yet our Saviour expressly declares, that except we keep the law in a more perfect manner than they did, we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven; because their exactness in these duties was

accompanied with several radical defects, which were particularly odious in the sight of God.

Now their defects in the observance of the law were chiefly these—(1.) They carefully avoided smaller sins, and made much of outward observances, but neglected the more essential duties which the law prescribed. On this account our Saviour says to them, "Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, who pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have let alone the weightier things of the law, judgment, and mercy, and faith; these things you ought to have done, and not to leave those others undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat, and swallow a camel," Mat. xxiii. 23. Thus they thought it a crime when hungry to pluck ears of corn on the Sabbath, but made no scruple to "devour the houses of widows," Mat. xxiii. 14. They thought it a crime to eat with unwashed hands, but deemed it no sin to "shut the kingdom of heaven against men," ver. 13. They would not enter the hall of Pilate upon a festival day, lest they might be defiled; but they made no account of accusing the Son of God falsely, and condemning Him to the death of the cross.

(2.) They were careful to avoid the outward crimes which were expressly forbidden by the law, but they took no care to cleanse their hearts from the internal crimes of evil thoughts, unjust desires, hatred, envy, and revenge; wherefore our Saviour says to them, "Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but within you are full of extortion and uncleanness. . . . You are like the whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones and all filthiness. So you also, outwardly indeed, appear to men just, but within you are full of hypocrisy and ini-

quity," Mat. xxiii. 25, 27, 28. "You serpents, generation of vipers, how will you escape the judgment of hell?" ver. 33.

(3.) They were filled with pride and self-conceit, and attributed to themselves any good they did instead of giving glory to God. They were arrogant, and despised others. Thus the proud Pharisee that went up to the temple to pray, exalted himself, on account of some good works he did, above all other men, and particularly above the humble publican, who with a contrite heart was crying for mercy at the same time; and on account of this pride Jesus Christ declared, that with all his good works he was condemned in the sight of God.

(4.) They did their works to be seen and praised by men; they cared little or nothing whether they pleased God or not, provided they pleased the world, and gained the applause and esteem of men, Mat. xxiii. 5. When they gave alms, "they sounded the trumpet before them, . . . that they might be honoured by men." When they prayed, they spoke much, and "stood praying in the streets and synagogues that they might be seen by men;" when they fasted, "they disfigured their faces, that they might be seen by men to fast," Mat. vi. 2, 5, 16; for this reason our Saviour declared that they could obtain no reward from God in heaven for their pretended good works, having already received the reward they sought in the applause of the world.

From this we see in what manner we are obliged to keep the commandments of God, that our justice may exceed that of the Pharisees, and entitle us to a place in heaven, which theirs was incapable of acquiring. (1.) We must keep the whole law, and perform all the duties prescribed by it. We must not lay undue stress on small

matters, neglecting greater duties, neither must we neglect small duties on pretence that they are of little consequence. "Those things you ought to do, and not to leave these others undone," says Christ Himself; and "he that neglects small things shall fall by little and little," as the wise man assures us. We must not allow ourselves to be so blinded as to overlook the malice of things which please and flatter our passions and depraved affections; but we must carefully observe whatever the Divine law prescribes; for "whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all," James, ii. 10. (2.) We must not only be exact in performing the external duties which the law ordains, and in abstaining from those exterior crimes which it forbids, but we must be equally careful in purifying our hearts, and cleansing the inward affections of the soul, never dwelling in thought upon anything sinful, much less taking delight and pleasure in such thoughts, not consenting to them, nor desiring any unlawful object, knowing that "perverse thoughts separate from God," Wis. i. 3; and that not only those who do evil actions are "worthy of death, but they also who consent to those who do them," Rom. i. 32. (3.) We must accompany our obedience with profound humility, feeling persuaded that of ourselves we can do nothing; that it is God who works in us both to will and to accomplish according to His good pleasure," Philip. ii. 13; and that all the good we do is owing to His merciful assistance, and therefore all the praise and glory is due to Him alone. Hence we ought to accompany our obedience with a total diffidence in ourselves, and an entire confidence in God, humbly begging His assistance before we begin any work, and from our heart giving thanks to Him when it is ended; not taking to ourselves praise for anything, nor valuing

ourselves in our own mind when anything succeeds, but sincerely acknowledging, when we have done all, that "we are but unprofitable servants." (4.) We must have a pure intention in all we do, seeking only to please God in obedience to His will, being well assured that God will reward no action that is not done for His sake; and therefore, "whether we eat or drink, or whatever else we do, we must do all to the glory of God," as St Paul requires, 1 Cor. x. 31.

Q. 13. Are all obliged to know the commands?

A. Most undoubtedly; the obligation which all lie under of keeping the commandments, obliges all to know them; for how can they obey what they do not know? Now we may observe three different degrees of perfection in knowing the commandments. (1.) To know the words of the commandments by heart; this is the first and lowest degree of knowledge of them; it is necessary, but will be to little purpose if we rest in it, and go no further. (2.) To know the sense and meaning of the words, and the various duties and obligations contained in them. This is more than the former, and most necessary, but still not sufficient; for though we should know our duty ever so perfectly, this knowledge, if alone, instead of bringing us to heaven, will rather increase our condemnation. (3.) To know the law of God in practice, to love it, to make it the rule of our conduct, and in everything to act according to its light,—this is the true saving knowledge which we must all study to acquire; because this alone will bring us to eternal happiness. "Be ye doers of the word," says the holy apostle James, "and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves; . . . for he that hath looked into the perfect law of liberty, and hath continued therein, not becoming a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work; this man shall be blessed in his

deed," James, i. 22, 25. "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified," Rom. ii. 13.

Q. 14. By what means can we acquire this practical knowledge of the law?

A. Chiefly by serious and attentive meditation on the law itself, upon its beauty and excellence, on the strict obligation we are under to obey it, and on the great advantage of keeping it with our whole heart. Thus Almighty God, after exhorting us by the mouth of the wise man to this practical knowledge of the law in these words, "My son, keep My commandments, and thou shalt live, and My law as the apple of thy eye," immediately adds, as the means to acquire it, "Bind it upon thy fingers, write it upon the tables of thy heart," Prov. vii. 2, 3; that is, have it always before your eyes, as if it were bound upon your fingers, and let it sink deep unto your heart, by serious meditation. And this He ordained still more clearly by His prophet Moses, who says: 'These words which I command thee this day shall be in thy heart; and thou shalt tell them to thy children, and thou shalt meditate upon them sitting in thy house, and walking on thy journey, sleeping and rising; and thou shalt bind them as a sign on thy hand, and they shall be, and shall move between thy eyes, and thou shalt write them in thy entry, and on the doors of thy house," Deut. xi. 6-10. Nothing can be more express than this, or show more manifestly how much it is our duty frequently, or rather continually, to meditate on the law of God, to have it always before your eyes, and study in everything to conform ourselves to it. And besides these strong injunctions to do so, we have many promises in Scripture of the most ample blessings to encourage us: thus, "Blessed is the man . . . whose will is in the law of the Lord, and

in His law he shall meditate day and night. He shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruits in due season: and his leaf shall not fall off; and all whatsoever he shall do shall prosper," Ps. i. 1-3. "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord: blessed are they that search His testimonies, that seek Him with their whole heart," Ps. cxviii. 1, 2.

Q. 15. What are the excellences of the law of God?

A. They are beautifully described by David in the following words: "The law of the Lord is unspotted, converting souls: the testimony of the Lord is faithful, giving wisdom to little ones. The justices of the Lord are right, rejoicing hearts: the commandment of the Lord is lightsome, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is holy, enduring for ever and ever: the judgments of the Lord are true, justified in themselves. More to be desired than gold and many precious stones; and sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. For Thy servant keepeth them, and in keeping them there is a great reward," Ps. xviii. 8-12.

Q. 16. What are the advantages of keeping the law of God?

A. They are many and excellent; for, (1.) By keeping the commandments of God we give Him supreme honour and worship, and offer to Him a most acceptable homage, for "obedience is better than sacrifice;" and we discharge the most essential duty we owe to our Creator, and give Him the most convincing proof of our love. (2.) We become friends and brethren of all the saints in heaven, who by their obedience to the law of God have arrived securely at the possession of that eternal bliss which they now enjoy. (3.) We become friends and brethren of Jesus Christ, who expressly says, "Whoever

shall do the will of My Father that is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother." (4.) We become conformable to the image of Christ, Who had the law of His Father in the midst of His heart, and "was obedient to death, even the death of the cross." (5.) We become friends of God Himself, and are placed in such a particular manner under the protection of His Divine Providence, that He makes everything turn out to our greater benefit and advantage, for "all things work together for good to them that love God." (6.) We become the temples of the ever-blessed Trinity, and are in a special manner beloved by God; for Christ Himself says, "If any man love Me, he will keep My words, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him," John, xiv. 23. (7.) We are sure that our prayers will be heard to our greatest advantage, for "Whatsoever we shall ask, we shall receive of Him, because we keep His commandments," 1 John, iii. 22. (8.) We are sure that He will so far bless the work of our hands, or in such manner employ the other resources of His providence, as to supply us with the necessaries of this life, in the measure and proportion which may be most for the good of our souls: for Jesus Christ Himself assures us that, if we "seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, all those things shall be added to us," Mat. vi. 33; and, moreover, that He will give us that interior peace and contentment of mind which the world cannot give, and which will be a comfort and support to us under all the trials and difficulties to which this our mortal pilgrimage is continually exposed. (9.) We shall, if we persevere to the end in our steady obedience to the law of God, obtain a happy death, and the eternal salvation of our souls, for "if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments," Mat. xix. 17.

Q. 17. What, then, are the great motives that ought to induce us to a faithful observance of the law of God?

A. Duty and interest.

Q. 18. On what is our duty founded?

A. Chiefly on two things, *justice and gratitude.* Our duty in justice rises from the absolute and supreme dominion which God has over us and all creatures, as the work of His hands, made only for His pleasure, and having a total dependence upon Him. Our duty in gratitude arises from the unspeakable goodness of God, and the love He has for us and daily shows towards us in the most endearing manner.

Q. 19. How does our own interest oblige us to keep the commandments of God?

A. Because our only true happiness, both in this life and in the next, in time and in eternity, depends upon our doing so.

CHAPTER II.

THE SUPREME DOMINION OF GOD OVER US, AND HOW MUCH WE ARE BOUND IN JUSTICE TO SERVE HIM.

Q. 1. IS it necessary to have a proper knowledge of the supreme dominion of God before we enter upon the explanation of His commandments?

A. It is highly proper, and in some degree necessary, considering the corruption of our heart, and its unwillingness to obey Him; for, by a just sense of His authority and power over us, we shall be excited to greater fervour and a stronger resolution to yield to our sovereign Lord the obedience we owe Him. And hence, when He first published His law, He began by reminding His people of His great power and supreme dominion, saying, "I am the Lord thy God, Who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Now, in order to conceive a proper idea of His supreme dominion over us and all creatures, we must both consider His almighty power in itself, and then His authority over us.

Section I.

Of the Almighty Power of God.

Q. 2. By what means can we acquire a proper knowledge of the almighty power of God?

A. By considering the innumerable and stupendous effects which His power has produced and can produce, and the admirable and inconceivable manner in which He acts in producing them.

Q. 3. What are we chiefly to consider in the effects produced by the power of God?

A. (1.) Their *stupendous greatness;* of which the Scripture saith, "He doth things great and incomprehensible, and wonderful, of which there is no number," Job, ix. 10. Take a view of the globe of this earth; what an amazing fabric it is! what immense power must that be which could create it! what almighty strength that could establish it on its solid foundation, adorn it with such a wonderful variety of mountains and valleys, draw out from its bowels those surprising aqueducts which everywhere flow through it, and dig that immense and fathomless basin which contains the ocean! What are all the most celebrated works of human power compared to this single work of the power of God! and yet this is but a single grain to the whole. Raise up your thoughts to the heavenly bodies; consider the sun, that amazing globe of fire, many hundred times larger than the earth itself; view the planets that surround him, the blazing comets that from time to time approach him; consider the immense regions which they traverse in the course of their rotation, and the inconceivable velocity

with which they run their course! beyond these behold the firmament of heaven—amazing sphere! boundless circumference! adorned with innumerable stars, worlds upon worlds! what a stupendous work is this! what amazing strength that could create it! what unbounded power that continues to preserve and govern it! Such is the power of the God whom we serve. He it is "that prepared the earth for evermore, and filled it with cattle and four-footed beasts; He that sendeth forth light, and it goeth; and hath called it, and it obeyeth Him with trembling. And the stars have given light in their watches and rejoiced: they were called, and they said, here we are: and with cheerfulness they have shined forth to Him that made them. This is our God, and there shall no other be accounted of in comparison of Him," Bar. iii. 32. "He is thy praise and thy God, that hath done these great and terrible things, which thy eyes have seen," Deut. x. 21. "The firmament on high is His beauty, the beauty of heaven with its glorious show; the sun when he appeareth showing forth at his rising, an admirable instrument, the work of the Most High; . . . great is the Lord that made him! . . . The glory of the stars is the beauty of heaven; the Lord enlighteneth the world from on high. By the words of the Holy One they shall stand in judgment, and shall never fail in their watches. Look upon the rainbow, and bless Him that made it; it is very beautiful in its brightness. It encompasseth the heaven about with the circle of its glory. The hands of the Most High have displayed it. . . . What shall we be able to do to glorify Him? For the Almighty Himself is above all His works. The Lord is terrible and exceeding great, and His power is admirable!" Ecclus. xliii. 1, 2, 5, 10-13, 30, 31.

(2.) "*Their amazing multitude and variety.*" Who can

conceive or form an idea of the immense variety of the works of God in the creation? The royal prophet acknowledges with astonishment that they are beyond all computation. "Thou hast multiplied Thy wonderful works, O Lord my God," says he, "and in Thy thoughts there is no one like to Thee. I have declared, and I have spoken; they are multiplied above number," Ps. xxxix. 6. "Look up to heaven," says Almighty God Himself to Abraham, "and number the stars if thou canst," Gen. xv. 5. It is God alone "Who can tell the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names," Ps. cxlvi. 4. Take a view of this earth on which we dwell: what an amazing variety do we find of beasts on the earth, of birds in the air, of fishes in the waters, of plants and herbs and trees without number, of insects and creeping things, beyond all comprehension! The same royal prophet, astonished at the sight, exclaims with surprise, "How great are Thy works, O Lord! Thou hast made all things in wisdom. The earth is filled with Thy riches; so is this great sea which stretches wide its arms: in it there are creeping things without number; creatures little and great," Ps. ciii. 24, 25. "There," says the wise man, "are great and wonderful works, variety of beasts and of all living things, and the monstrous creatures of whales. Through Him is established the end of their journey, and by His word all things are regulated," Ecclus. xliii. 27, 28. But what shall we say of the numbers beyond number of those spiritual beings, of those holy angels, who assist continually before the throne of God?—"Is there any numbering of His soldiers?" says one of Job's friends, Job, xxv. 3. Oh no, says Daniel,—"Thousands of thousands minister to Him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before Him," Dan. vii. 10. And who was it that

created such a vast variety of beings? "Look upon heaven and earth, and all that is in them, and consider that God made them out of nothing, and mankind also," 2 Mac. vii. 28. "Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee: and the birds of the air, and they shall tell thee. Speak to the earth, and it shall answer thee; and the fishes of the sea shall tell. Who is ignorant that the hand of the Lord made all these things? In Whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the spirit of all flesh of man," Job, xii. 7. But what amazing power must that be which could produce such numberless beings, and bestow upon each their various powers, faculties, properties, and natures! How are we lost in astonishment at the thought! How is our mind bewildered and confounded! "Great are the works of our Lord: sought out according to all His wills. His work is praise and magnificence," Ps. cx. 2. "Sing ye a psalm to His name; give glory to His praise: say unto God, How terrible are Thy works, O Lord! . . . Come and see the works of God, Who is terrible in His counsels," Ps. lxv. 2. "The Lord is terrible and exceeding great, and His power is admirable," Ecclus. xliii. 31.

(3.) *The wonderful effects of His power, which He daily produces among all creatures throughout the universe.* Indeed that immense power of God which created all things, can surely do with them whatever He pleases; for His Holy Word assures us, that "whatsoever the Lord pleases He hath done in heaven, in earth, in the sea, and in all the depths," Ps. cxxxiv. 6; "that all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing before Him; and He doth according to His will with the powers of heaven, as among the inhabitants of the earth; and there is none that can resist His hand, or say to Him, Why

hast thou done it?" Dan. iv. 32; and that "at a beck He can destroy the whole world," 2 Mac. viii. 18. But let us consider the effects of His infinite power, as described in the Holy Scriptures themselves. "He is wise in heart," says Job, "and mighty in strength;" for He it is "who removed mountains, and they whom He overthrew in His wrath knew it not. Who shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble. Who commandeth the sun, and it riseth not; and shutteth up the stars as it were under a seal. Who alone spreadeth out the heavens, and walketh upon the waves of the sea," Job, ix. 4. So also the wise man thus beautifully describes this almighty power of God: "By His commandment He maketh the snow to fall apace, and sendeth forth swiftly the lightnings of His judgment. Through this are the treasures opened, and the clouds fly out like birds. By His greatness He hath fixed the clouds, and the hailstones are broken. At His sight shall the mountains be shaken, and at His will the south wind shall blow. The noise of His thunder shall strike the earth, so doth the northern storm and whirlwind. And as the birds lighting upon the earth, He scattereth snow, and the falling thereof is as the coming down of locusts. . . . He shall pour frost as salt upon the earth, and when it freezeth, it shall become like the tops of thistles. . . . At His word the wind is still, and with His thought He appeaseth the deep," Ecclus. xliii. 14. I will destroy," says God Himself, "and swallow up at once; I will lay waste the mountains and hills, and will make all their grass to wither. And I will turn rivers into islands, and will dry up the standing pools. I will lead the blind into the way which they know not, and in the paths which they were ignorant of. I will make them to walk; I will make darkness light before them,

and crooked things straight," Isa. xlii. 14. But there is no place where the wondrous works of God are more beautifully described, than in the interrogatories which He Himself puts to Job on this subject; for in them such majesty and grandeur appear, that one cannot peruse them without being struck with a sacred dread. "Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that wrappeth up sentences in unskilful words? Gird up thy loins like a man; I will ask thee, and answer thou Me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell me, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measure thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Upon what are its bases grounded? or who laid the corner-stone thereof? . . . Who shut up the sea with doors, when it broke forth as issuing out of the womb: when I made a cloud the garment thereof, and wrapt it up in a mist as in swaddling-bands? I set My bounds around it, and made it bars and doors; and I said, Hitherto shalt thou come, and shalt go no farther, and here thou shalt break thy swelling waves. Didst thou since thy birth command the morning, and show the dawning of the day its place? And didst thou hold the extremities of the earth, shaking them; and hast thou shaken the ungodly out of it? . . . Hast thou entered into the depths of the sea, and walked in the lowest parts of the deep? Have the gates of death been open to thee, and hast thou seen the darksome doors? . . . Hast thou entered into storehouses of the snow, or hast thou beheld the treasures of the hail? . . . By what way is the light spread, and the heat divided upon the earth? Who gave a course to violent showers, or a way for noisy thunder? . . . Who is the father of rain? or who begot the drops of dew? Out of whose womb came the ice? And the frost from

heaven, who hath gendered it? The waters are hardened like a stone, and the surface of the deep is congealed. . . . Canst thou bring forth the day-star in its time, and make the evening star to rise upon the children of the earth? Dost thou know the order of the heavens, and canst thou set down the order thereof on the earth? . . . Canst thou send lightnings, and will they go? And will they return and say to thee, Here we are? Who hath put wisdom into the heart of man? or who gave the cock understanding? . . . Wilt thou take the prey for the lioness, and satisfy the appetite of her whelps when they couch in the dens, and lie in wait in holes? Who provideth food for the raven, when her young ones cry to God, wandering about, because they have no meat?" Job, xxxviii. What a wonderful display is here of the almighty power of God, and of the amazing things He performs among His creatures! Oh! with what reason does the wise man exclaim, "Who is able to declare His works? for who shall search out His glorious acts? and who shall show forth the power of His majesty? Nothing may be taken away nor added; neither is it possible to find out the glorious works of God. When a man hath done, then shall he begin again; and when he leaveth off, then he shall be at a loss," Ecclus. xviii. 2-6. For so great and incomprehensible is God, that when a man has done all he can to find out the greatness of His power, and His boundless perfections, he has still to begin; for what he has discovered is but a mere nothing in comparison with His infinity.

And, indeed, what are all the wondrous works which God has done, however great and stupendous, compared with what he can do? "There are many things hidden from us that are greater than these, for we have seen but a few of His works," Ecclus. xliii. 36. But there are

infinitely more still, and more wonderful things in the boundless womb of *possibility*, which the almighty power of God is able to produce; for "with God all things are possible," Mat. xix. 26. "The Lord is as a man of war, Almighty is His name," Exod. xv. 3. Numbers of worlds could He create, if He pleased, in the vast expanse of His immensity, each of them as far superior to the present creation in perfections, as this earth itself is to an ant-hill. What amazing power, then, is the power of God, infinitely above all thought and comprehension! "He is great, and does wonderful things; He is God alone," Ps. lxxxv. 10.

Q. 4. What effects ought the consideration of this infinite power of God to produce in our souls?

A. Principally these following: (1.) It ought to excite us to praise and glorify Him with all our powers and affections. "Give ye magnificence," says the holy prophet Moses, "to our God: the works of God are perfect, and all His ways are judgments," Deut. xxxii. 3, 4. "There is none among the gods," says David, "like to Thee, O Lord; and there is none according to Thy works. All the nations Thou hast made shall come and adore before Thee, O Lord; and they shall glorify Thy name: for Thou art great, and dost wonderful things; Thou art God alone," Ps. lxxxv. 8. "The heavens shall confess Thy wonders, O Lord; and Thy truth in the Church of the saints. For who in the clouds can be compared to the Lord? or who among the sons of God shall be like to God? God, who is glorified in the assembly of the saints, great and terrible, above all them that are about Him. O Lord God of hosts, who is like to Thee? Thou art mighty, O Lord, and Thy truth is round about Thee. Thou rulest the power of the sea, and appeasest the motion of the waves thereof. . . . Thine are the heav-

ens, and Thine is the earth: the world, and the fulness thereof, Thou hast founded: the north and the south Thou hast created. . . . Let Thy hand be strengthened, and Thy right hand be exalted," Ps. lxxxviii. 6-10, 12-14.

(2.) It ought to produce in us sentiments of profound respect, awe, and reverence towards so mighty a being. This the prophet Jeremiah declares: "There is none like to Thee, O Lord: Thou art great, and great is Thy name in might. Who shall not fear Thee, O King of nations? For Thine is the glory; among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms there is none like unto Thee. They shall be proved together to be senseless and foolish; a stock is the doctrine of their vanity. . . . But the Lord is the true God; He is the living God, and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide His threatening," Jer. x. 6-8, 10. The saints in heaven are penetrated with fear and reverence, in considering the wonderful works of God—how much more ought we poor mortals? Thus St John heard the blessed spirits praising God: "Great and wonderful are Thy works, O Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, O King of ages: who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and magnify Thy name?" Rev. xv. 3. Even the heathen king Darius, when he saw the wonderful power of God in delivering Daniel from the lions, immediately sent these orders to all his subjects: "It is decreed by me, that in all my empire and my kingdom all men dread and fear the God of Daniel. For He is the living and eternal God for ever: . . . He is the deliverer and the Saviour, doing signs and wonders in heaven and earth," Dan. vi. 26, 27. And no wonder the infinite power of God should produce this fear and dread in our minds, when we reflect

what He is, and what we are before Him. The wise man proposes to us this consideration, addressing himself to God in these affecting terms: "Great power always belonged to Thee alone; and who shall resist the strength of Thy arm? For the whole world before Thee is as the least grain of the balance, and as a drop of the morning dew that falleth down upon the earth," Wis. xi. 22, 23. And Isaiah, in a still stronger light, proposes to us the same important truth. "Who," says he, "hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and weighed the heavens with His palm? Who hath poised, with three fingers, the bulk of the earth, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath forwarded the Spirit of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor, and hath taught Him? . . . Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the smallest grain of a balance; behold, the islands are as a little dust; . . . all nations are before Him as if they had no being at all, and are counted to Him as nothing and vanity," Isa. xl. 12, 13, 15-17. And hence the royal prophet says to God, "Thou art fearfully magnified: wonderful are Thy works, and these my soul knoweth right well," Ps. cxxxviii. 14.

(3.) This holy fear and dread of God, in order to be agreeable to Him, and salutary to our own souls, must be accompanied by a continual attention to keep His commandments, and a horror at the very thought of offending so great a God by sin. Our obligation to this is a necessary consequence which flows from the almighty power of God, as must evidently appear to every human creature who seriously reflects upon it. Moses was sensible of this, and used it to excite his people to fear, love, and serve God. "Circumcise the foreskin of your heart," says he, "and stiffen your neck no more; because

the Lord your God, He is the God of gods, and the Lord of lords; a great God, and mighty and terrible, Who accepteth no person, nor taketh bribes. . . . Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve Him only; to Him thou shalt adhere, and swear by His name. He is thy praise and thy God, that hath done for thee those great and terrible things which thy eyes have seen. . . . Therefore love the Lord thy God, and observe His precepts and ceremonies, His judgments and commandments at all times," Deut. x. 16-21; xi. 1. And, indeed, what man in his senses would choose to insult a Being Whose almighty power can crush him to atoms, torment him in whatever manner He pleases, or reduce him to nothing in an instant? "The Lord killeth and maketh alive; He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth back again. The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich; He humbleth, and He exalteth," 1 Kings (Sam.), ii. 6, 7. "See ye," says God Himself, "that I alone am, and there is no other God besides Me. I will kill, and I will make alive, I will strike and will heal; and there is none that can deliver out of My hand. . . . If I shall whet My sword as the lightning, and My hand shall take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to My enemies, and repay them that hate Me. I will make My arrows drunk with blood, and My sword shall devour flesh, of the blood of the slain and of the captivity, and of the bare head of the enemies," Deut. xxxii. 39, 41, 42. How dreadful must it be to fall into the hands of such a God, Who can do what He pleases, and will not spare His enemies! The prophet Jeremiah, confounded at this thought, cries out thus to God: "O most mighty, great, and powerful, the Lord of Hosts is Thy name: great in counsel, and incomprehensible in thought, Whose eyes are upon all the ways of the children of Adam, to render unto every

one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his devices," Jer. xxxii. 18, 19. Hear, also, how the prophet Nahum describes the terrors of His avenging power against His enemies: "The Lord is a jealous God and a revenger; the Lord is a revenger and hath wrath: the Lord taketh vengeance on His adversaries, and is angry with His enemies. The Lord is patient and great in power, and will not cleanse and acquit the guilty. The Lord's ways are in a tempest and a whirlwind, and clouds are the dust of His feet. He rebuketh the sea and drieth it up, and bringeth all the rivers to be a desert. . . . The mountains tremble at Him, and the hills are made desolate: and the earth hath quaked at His presence, and the world and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before the face of His indignation? and who shall resist in the fierceness of His anger? His indignation is poured out like fire, and the rocks are melted by Him," Nah. i. 1-6. What a dreadful description is here given us! How powerful a motive is not this to make us obey the commands of this great God with fear and trembling! What madness and folly is it, what presumption, for man, a worm of the earth, to dare to attack, by wilful sin, this Almighty God, Who created the universe: Who holds the thread of his life in His hand, and can, in a moment, let him drop into hell! What can he expect by making God his enemy, but the loss of all good, and the incurring of all misery, both in time and eternity? The moment he engages in this desperate war, the sword of the Almighty is drawn against him, and the perils of death, judgment, and hell on all sides surround him. What madness it must be to be drawn from our allegiance to God by anything in this world, whether of its goods or evils! What folly to be afraid of the weakness of men, and not be afraid

of the power of God! "Fear ye not the reproaches of men," says God Himself, "and be not afraid of their blasphemies; for the worm shall eat them up as a garment, and the moth shall consume them as wool; but My salvation shall be for ever, and My justice from generation to generation. . . . Who art thou that thou shouldst be afraid of a mortal man, and of the son of man, that shall wither away like grass? And thou hast forgotten the Lord thy Maker, Who stretched out the heavens, and founded the earth: and thou hast been afraid continually all the day at the presence of his fury who had afflicted thee, and had prepared himself to destroy thee: where is now the fury of the oppressor? . . . But I am the Lord thy God Who trouble the sea, and the waves thereof swell; the Lord of Hosts is My name!" Isa. li. 7-15. And Christ Himself, in the Gospel, draws the same conclusion from the mighty power of God: "I say to you, My friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you shall fear: fear ye Him, Who, after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell: yea, I say to you fear Him," Luke, xii. 4, 5.

(4.) Another noble effect which this wholesome fear of God, when accompanied with a good conscience, naturally produces in our souls, is *a great and firm confidence in the protection of the Almighty*, which is a source of infinite joy and consolation to us, in the midst of all the unavoidable dangers to which we are exposed. As nothing is more dreadful than to be at enmity with, so nothing is more desirable than to be in friendship with Him; "If God be for us, who is against us?" Rom. viii. 31. The holy prophet David, whose heart, as we have seen above, was penetrated with the fear of God, and

"who was delighted in the way of His testimonies above all riches, who was exercised in His commandments, and meditated upon His justifications," Ps. cxviii.—thus expresses the great confidence he had in His Divine protection: "Our God is our refuge and strength; a helper in troubles which have found us exceedingly: therefore we will not fear when the earth shall be troubled, and the mountains shall be removed into the heart of the sea," Ps. xlv. 1, 2. "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the protector of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? While the wicked draw near against me to eat my flesh, my enemies that troubled me have themselves been weakened and have fallen. If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear; if a battle should rise up against me, in this will I be confident," Ps. xxvi. 1-3. Now, whence does this confidence in God arise? Who are those whom God protects? The same royal prophet tells us: "Who is the man," says he, "that feareth the Lord? He hath appointed him a law in the way that he hath chosen. His soul shall dwell in good things, and his seed shall inherit the land: the Lord is a firmament to them that fear Him," Ps. xxiv. 12-14. God Himself confirms the same thing. "To whom," says He, "shall I have respect, but to him that is poor, and little, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at My words?" And, a little after, He adds: "Hear the word of the Lord, you that tremble at His word; your brethren that hate you, and cast you out, for My name's sake, . . . they shall be confounded," Isa. lxvi. 2, 5. And the beloved disciple adds: "Dearly beloved, if our heart do not reprehend us, we have confidence towards God: and whatsoever we shall ask, we shall receive of Him; because we keep

His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight," 1 John, iii. 21, 22. What a source of consolation must it be to a soul to be on such friendly terms with the Almighty God, against Whose will not a hair of our head can fall to the ground! It was this consideration which supported the valiant Judas, when attacked by powerful armies that threatened to destroy the holy place; for, when numbers of the people fled from fear, "he, calling together seven thousand that were with him, exhorted them not to fear the multitude of their enemies, who came wrongfully against them, but to fight manfully; . . . for," said he, "they trust in their weapons, and in their boldness; but we trust in the Almighty Lord, who, at a beck, can utterly destroy both them that come against us, and the whole world," 2 Mac. viii. 16, 18: and in consequence of this his confidence, he obtained, with his handful of men, a most complete victory over all their multitudes.

Q. 5. What do we find wonderful in the manner in which Almighty God exercises His power?

A. If the stupendous effects which His power has produced are so amazing, the admirable manner in which He exercises it is infinitely more so, and exceeds the comprehension of any created understanding. For, (1.) when He performs any work, however great and astonishing, He requires no length of time to complete it; He does it in an instant: He speaks the word, and immediately the work is done. Consider the vast fabric of this universe; what a grand production it is! what an infinite variety of beings it contains! "He spoke the word, and they were made; He commanded, and they were created," Ps. cxlviii. 5. "And God said, Be light made: and the light was made. And God said, Let there be a firmament made amidst the water: and it was so.

And God said, Let the waters that are under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so done. And God said, Let the earth bring forth the green herb, and trees yielding fruit: and immediately the earth was covered with all these productions. And God said, Let there be lights made to shine in the firmament of heaven, and to give light upon the earth: and in an instant the sun and moon, and all the stars appeared," Gen. i. What an amazing power is here displayed! Who can, in the smallest degree, conceive its greatness! What is all the power of men if compared with this? A mere nothing. The smallest work produced by man can never be performed but in some length of time, and the greater it is, the more the time required; but God in an instant—in the twinkling of an eye, created the most stupendous objects!

(2.) When man has any work to do, it costs him toil and labour; he must exert the strength he has, and after a little labour must rest to recruit it. But with God it is not so: to Him everything is easy; the greatest as well as the smallest. It costs Him no toil, gives Him no fatigue, requires no exertion; it is enough that He wills it, be it what it may, and His all-powerful will is instantly fulfilled. "Behold," says He, "I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; shall anything be hard for Me?" Jer. xxxii. 27. No, no; His word alone is sufficient to create in an instant ten thousand worlds. Oh, tremendous power! how is the mind of man confounded at the thought! "The pillars of heaven tremble and dread at his beck," Job, xxvi. 11. David was amazed when he considered this mighty power, and mentions it with fear and trembling: "By the word of the Lord the heavens were established, and all the power of them by the spirit of His mouth. . . . Let all the earth fear the Lord, and all the inhabit-

ants of the world be in awe of Him; for He spoke, and they were made; He commanded, and they were created," Ps. xxxii. 6, 8, 9.

(3.) His almighty power depends on no other; it is essential to Himself—it is identified with His very nature. He stands in no need of any one to assist Him—He alone is powerful. The world has frequently admired the power of kings and princes who have conquered nations, overthrown empires, and been the terror and scourge of their fellow-creatures; but was it by their own personal power they did so? was their power inherent? By no means: it was by the strength of other men, and of the numerous armies they commanded, that all their famous deeds were performed. But God needs no such help: he possesses in Himself the plenitude of power, and by His almighty word alone does whatever He pleases. "Who is like to Me?" says God Himself; "let him call and declare. . . . Is there a God beside Me; a maker whom I have not known? I am the Lord that make all things—that alone stretch out the heavens—that establish the earth, and there is none with me," Isa. xliv. 7, 8, 24.

(4.) Even in those works which a man performs by himself, what can he do without the proper instruments? What can the husbandman do without his plough? the smith without his hammer? the soldier without his arms? or the mason without his trowel? But God has no occasion for any such means; His all-powerful will stands instead of all! "By His power the seas are suddenly gathered together, and His wisdom has struck the proud one. His spirit has adorned the heavens, and His artful hand hath brought forth the winding serpent," Job, xxvi. 12, 13. "By the word of the Lord the heavens were established, and all the powers of them by

the spirit of His mouth," Ps. xxxii. 6. Now this word of God—this spirit or breath of His mouth—is not like the words of man, which requires to be pronounced by the lips and tongue, and imply some force used, some exertion made; the word of God is nothing but the internal act of His will, than which nothing can be produced, even by man himself, with greater ease and velocity. This is the *three fingers* with which *He poises the bulk of the earth;* this *His palm* with which He *weighs the heavens;* this is the *hollow of His hand* in which He *measures the waters*, Isa. xl. 12; this His *right hand* by which He does such wondrous things;—this, in a word, is His *beck*, at which the pillars of heaven tremble, and with which alone He can destroy the whole world and reduce it again to nothing!

(5.) But what, above all other considerations, bewilders our imagination and confounds our understanding is, that the power of God is so amazingly great, and acts in a manner so different from everything we know, and so peculiar to itself alone, that it not only has no need of exertions and efforts, of external helps and instruments, but not even of matter to act upon, which all the works of men presuppose as existing before the smallest thing can be made by them. But with God it is not so. Take a view once more of all the wonders of the creation; consider the mighty fabric itself, and the innumerable multitude of beings, both spiritual and material, both animate and inanimate, that it contains; "Look upon heaven and earth, and all that is in them, and consider that God made them *out of nothing*, and mankind also," 2 Mac. vii. 28. Oh! here, indeed, we are altogether lost in wonder! What an amazing strength must that be, what incomprehensible power, which can in an instant, without the least labour or toil, by a simple act of the will

create, I do not say a grain of sand, or the smallest insect, but innumerable worlds, *out of mere nothing*, where there was not the smallest appearance of being, not even the shadow of existence! How tremendous that Almighty Being, Whose power operates even upon nothing itself, and Who, as St Paul assures us, "calleth those things that are not, as those that are," Rom. iv. 17; and not only "giveth strength to the weary, but even gives force and might to them that are not"! Isa. xl. 29. How vain does all the strength of man appear when compared to the power of God! what a mere nothing are the greatest potentates of the earth when compared to Him Whose name is *The Almighty!* "Who is like to Thee among the strong, O Lord? who is like to Thee, glorious in holiness, terrible and praiseworthy, doing wonders?" Exod. xv. 11. "Thine, O Lord, is magnificence and power, glory and victory, and to Thee is praise; for all that is in heaven and earth is Thine: Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art above all princes. Thine are riches, and Thine is glory, Thou hast dominion over all; in Thy hand is power and might, in Thy hand greatness, and the empire of all things," 1 Chron. xxix. 11.

Section II.

Of the Supreme Dominion of Jurisdiction which God has over all Creatures.

Q. 6. What is understood by *dominion?*

A. These words, *strength*, *power*, and *dominion*, have each their proper signification. *Strength* properly signifies the personal force, vigour, or ability which one possesses in himself, and by which he can produce

certain effects. *Dominion* signifies the right, title, or authority which one has to exert his strength on other beings. *Power* signifies both the one and the other. But whereas *strength* more properly signifies personal abilities, whether of body or mind, which are intrinsic to the person in whom it resides; *power* also signifies these extrinsic abilities which one has from the help of others joined with him,—as the power which kings have, by means of their armies, or which is found in different states joined together in league or society. We have seen how infinitely great are the strength and power which God possesses in Himself alone, and by which He can do whatever is possible to be done in heaven, in earth, and in all creatures, and even in mere nothing. We now come to consider His dominion over all things, or that supreme authority, that unlimited right which He has to use His almighty power over all His creatures in whatever manner He pleases.

Q. 7. How many kinds of dominion are there?

A. Two kinds: the dominion of *jurisdiction*, and the dominion of *property*.

Q. 8. What is the *dominion of jurisdiction?*

A. The dominion of jurisdiction is the authority and right that one has to govern others, to lay commands upon them, to make laws, and to enforce obedience to His commands and laws by rewards and punishments. This is the dominion of kings, lords, princes, and of all who possess lawful authority over others. It always implies a corresponding obligation upon subjects to obey the laws and perform the commands of such lawful superiors.

Q. 9. Has God this dominion of jurisdiction over all creatures?

A. All possible dominion over all creatures essentially

belongs to God, and His dominion over them, both of jurisdiction and property, is absolute, complete, without exception or limitation; it is also unalienable, and so essentially belongs to Him, that it can never be weakened or diminished, nor is it possible for any creature ever to withdraw itself from subjection to Him.

Q. 10. To what does the dominion of jurisdiction which God has over His reasonable creatures extend?

A. It extends to all such creatures, and to everything they are capable of doing. (1.) It embraces all intelligent beings, whether angels or men—from the most sublime spirit in heaven to the lowest of the human race, from the king upon the throne to the poorest beggar; for He is "the only Mighty, the King of kings and Lord of lords," 1 Tim. vi. 15. "Bless the Lord," says David, "all ye His angels, you that are mighty in strength, and execute His word, hearkening to the voice of His orders. Bless the Lord, all ye His hosts, you ministers that do His will," Ps. cii. 20, 21. "Thine, O Lord," says Solomon, "is magnificence and power; . . . Thou art above all princes; . . . in Thy hand is greatness, and the empire of all things," 1 Chron. xxix. 11, 12. (2.) His authority over all these intelligent beings extends to everything whatsoever that He pleases to require of them. There is no action of theirs so indifferent in itself that He cannot make it the matter of a law, and require their obedience under the severest penalty; His Divine will is the supreme rule of all righteousness, which every reasonable creature is indispensably obliged to obey. (3.) His Divine authority extends to all manner of punishments, which He has the most unlimited right to inflict upon those who presume to disobey Him, of whatever kind, in whatever manner, and to whatever

extent, His infinite wisdom and justice shall judge proper. "Who shall say to Thee, *O God*, what hast Thou done? or who shall withstand Thy judgment? or who shall come before Thee to be a revenger of wicked men? or who shall accuse Thee if the nations perish which Thou hast made? For there is no other God but Thou, . . . neither shall king nor tyrant in Thy sight inquire about them whom Thou hast destroyed," Wis. xii. 12, 13. Hence, when God gave the law to His people, He began by these tremendous words, I AM THE LORD THY GOD, to put them in mind of His supreme dominion over them, and of the unreserved obedience which they essentially owed to Him; and for the same reason, in many places of the law, particularly in the eighteenth and nineteenth chapter of Leviticus, He frequently intersperses these words, *I am the Lord*, and ends the whole with this clause, "Keep all My precepts, and all My judgments, and do them. *I am the Lord*," Lev. xix. 37. Showing that this alone was sufficient to engage their obedience to everything He had commanded them, and to obviate every difficulty which their self-love, sensuality, or reason could suggest to the contrary.

Q. 11. How does this dominion of God extend to irrational and inanimate creatures?

A. Here, indeed, the sovereign authority of the Almighty shines forth in the most splendid manner; for His dominion over irrational and inanimate creatures makes those beings sensible of His commands, though in themselves they have no sense, and procures the most exact and perfect obedience even from those that have no understanding. His power and authority over them is such, that He may command whatever He pleases, and whatever He commands them, His com-

mands are instantly obeyed. "Praise the Lord," says the royal prophet, "from the earth, ye dragons and all ye deeps, fire, hail, snow, ice, stormy winds, which fulfil His word," Ps. cxlviii. 7, 8. "Thou hast founded the earth, and it continueth: by Thy ordinance the day goeth on; for all things serve Thee," Ps. cxviii. 90. "O Adonai Lord, great art Thou, and glorious in Thy power, and no one can overcome Thee. Let all Thy creatures serve Thee; because Thou hast spoken and they were made; Thou didst send forth Thy Spirit and they were created, and there is no one that can resist Thy voice. The mountains shall be moved from the foundations with the waters; the rock shall melt as wax before Thy face," Judith, xvi. 16.

Q. 12. Are there any particular examples in Scripture of this ready obedience in these creatures to the commands of God?

A. Yes, there are great numbers besides those that happened at the creation, which we have seen above (Q. 5, No. 1). Thus Jesus Christ said to the leper, "I will, be thou clean; and immediately his leprosy was cleansed." To the good centurion, who with so great faith acknowledged this His sovereign dominion over all creatures, He made this reply: "As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee: and His servant who was lying at home sick of the palsy was healed at the same hour." When the disciples were overtaken at sea by a violent tempest, "rising up He commanded the winds and the sea, and there came a great calm: but the men wondered saying, What manner of man is this, for the winds and the sea *obey Him?*" Mat. viii. 26, 27. When St Peter's mother-in-law was "taken with a great fever, He commanded the fever, and it left her," Luke, iv. 39; with many other instances of the like nature, of which

the Holy Scriptures are full. What is still more surprising, all these creatures give Him this ready obedience, not only when He speaks to them Himself in person, but even when He gives them His orders by the mouth of His holy servants, who commanded them in His name. Witness the great and wondrous things performed by Moses and the other prophets, and particularly that of Joshua, who commanded the sun to stand still, and it obeyed him; and the wonderful cure of the lame man by St Peter, when he said, "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk. . . . And forthwith his feet and soles received strength; and he leaping up, stood and walked, and went in with them to the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God," Acts, iii. 6. To show the same supreme dominion of the Almighty over inanimate creatures, the Scripture says: "He sendeth forth the light, and it goeth; He hath called it, and it obeyeth him with trembling. . . . The stars were called, and they said, Here we are; and with cheerfulness they have shined forth to Him that made them," Bar. iii. 33, 38. What amazing power! what prodigious dominion is this! of whose commands nothing is insensible, to whose orders no creature makes resistance—whose authority is felt, understood, and obeyed by the whole creation! How absolute! how unlimited is this Divine dominion!

Q. 13. How is this dominion of God *essential* to Him?

A. The meaning of this is, that the supreme dominion which God possesses He has from Himself alone. It did not fall to Him by lot, He did not receive it by inheritance, it was not given to Him by another, He did not acquire it by violent invasion, nor did He receive it from the election and by the consent of His subjects: He possesses it from Himself alone; it is essential to His

nature, it is intrinsically due to His infinite perfections; He possesses it in His own right, because He alone is essentially worthy of it, and because all things are the work of His hands. Hence, "The four-and-twenty ancients fall down before Him that sitteth on the throne, and adore Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory, and honour, and power, because Thou hast created all things, and for Thy will they are, and have been created," Rev. iv. 10. And again: "I beheld," says St John, "and heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures, and the ancients: and the number of them was thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and benediction. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them; I heard all saying, To Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, benediction, and honour, and glory, and power, for ever and ever," Rev. v. 11. In another place he gives us a most awful description of this supreme Lord of all, who appeared to him in all the glories of His majesty, in these words: "And I saw heaven opened, and beheld a white horse, and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and with justice does He judge and fight. And His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written which no man knoweth but Himself. And He was clothed with a garment sprinkled with blood: and His name is called, THE WORD OF GOD. And the armies that are in heaven followed Him on white horses, clothed in fine linen white and

clean. And out of His mouth proceedeth a sharp two-edged sword, that with it He may strike the nations. And He shall rule them with a rod of iron; and He treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness of the wrath of God the Almighty: and He hath on His garment and on His thigh written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS," Rev. xix. 11. In which glorious name, written upon His garment and on His thigh, it is clearly declared that sovereign and universal dominion essentially belongs to Him alone; for as the Scripture declares of God that *Almighty is His name*, Exod. xv. 3, because almighty power essentially belongs to Him; so here He carries the awful name of *King of kings and Lord of lords*, because He no less essentially possesses the most absolute dominion over all creatures.

Q. 14. What is meant by saying *this supreme dominion of God* is inalienable?

A. This is a necessary consequence of its being essential to Him, and means that the supreme dominion over all creatures can never be diminished, can never be restrained, can never be lost or taken from Him. He can no more cease to have it than He can cease to be God, and creatures can no more cease to be subject to Him than they can cease to be creatures. Hence He is called in Scripture the God of dominion; for thus the wise man says, "There is One most high Creator Almighty, and a powerful King, and greatly to be feared, who sitteth upon His throne, and is THE GOD OF DOMINION," Ecclus. i. 8. For this reason His dominion, like Himself, is eternal, and must remain for ever and ever: "Thy kingdom," says David, "is a kingdom of all ages, and Thy dominion endureth throughout all generations," Ps. cxliv. 13. His power is an everlasting power, and His kingdom is to all

generations: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing before Him; for He doth according to His will, as well with the powers of heaven as among the inhabitants of the earth; and there is none that can resist His hand, and say to Him, Why hast Thou done it?" Dan. iv. 31, 32. "And all the people, tribes, and tongues, shall serve Him. His power is an everlasting power that shall not be taken away; and His kingdom shall not be destroyed," Dan. vii. 14; and therefore, "To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen." 1 Tim. i. 17.

Q. 15. What effects ought the consideration of this supreme dominion of God to produce in our souls?

A. Chiefly these two: (1.) A most profound humility, a reverential awe and dread of His infinite majesty. This is what St Peter earnestly recommends to all: "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Be you humble therefore, under the mighty hand of God," 1 Pet. v. 6. St Paul, in like manner says, "Let us serve, pleasing God, with fear and reverence; for our God is a consuming fire," Heb. xii. 28, 29. And, indeed, if so great veneration is shown to the majesty of earthly kings and princes, which is scarcely a shadow of majesty if compared with God—if their subjects tremble and are confounded in their presence, so as sometimes to be unable to speak before them,—with what sentiments of veneration, with what profound respect, ought our hearts to be penetrated in the presence of the most high God, the most august majesty of the uncreated, all-powerful King of heaven and earth? With what reverential dread and awe ought we to be overwhelmed every time we call to mind His Divine presence? every time we hear His adorable name pronounced? "Hear, O foolish

people," says He Himself, "and without understanding; will you not then fear Me, saith the Lord?" Jer. v. 21. *Me!* Who am the King of kings and the Lord of lords. *Me!* Who have the universe for My kingdom; all creatures for My subjects; for My throne, immensity; for My sceptre, omnipotence; for My diadem, eternity; for My soldiers, thunders and lightning, tempests and deluges, famines, plagues, and earthquakes. *Me!* Whose anger none can resist. *Me!* Who have your life in My hand, and can destroy you whenever I please; Who have the whole world in My power, and can reduce it to nothing in an instant. *Me!* so tremendous a prince; and you worms of the earth, My creatures, My vassals, My slaves! and will ye not fear Me? "If I be your your master, where is My fear? saith the Lord of Hosts," Mal. i. 6. O great God, truly "There is none like to Thee, O Lord; Thou art great, and great is Thy name in might. Who shall not fear Thee, O King of nations? for Thine is the glory: among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like unto Thee;" for "the Lord is the true God: He is the living God and the everlasting King: at His wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide His threatening," Jer. x. 6, 10. "Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket before Him, and are accounted as the smallest grain of a balance. . . . All the nations are before Him as if they had no being at all, and are counted to Him as nothing and vanity," Isa. xl. 15, 17. "What, then, is man, O Lord, that Thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" Ps. viii. 5. "What is the number of my days, that I may know what is wanting to me? Behold, Thou hast made my days measurable, and my substance is as nothing before Thee; and indeed all things are vanity;

every man living," Ps. xxxviii. 5, 6. And shall this vanity, this nothing, dare to set up its crest, and to walk with a high head and stretched-out neck, in the presence of the Almighty? Alas! how miserable a delusion would this be! "For if any man think himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself," Gal. vi. 3; and how fatal is his deception, by which Almighty God becomes his declared enemy, and threatens him with utter ruin and destruction! "If his pride mount up even to heaven, and his head touch the clouds, in the end he shall be destroyed like a dunghill, and they that have seen him shall say, Where is he? as a dream that fleeth away he shall not be found, he shall pass as a vision of the night," Job, xx. 6. And why so? "Behold I am against thee, O proud man, saith the Lord, the God of hosts, for the day is come, the time of thy visitation; and the proud one shall fall; he shall fall down, and there shall be none to lift him up: and I will kindle a fire in his cities, and it shall devour all round about him," Jer. l. 31. "Wherefore let us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, who resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble," 1 Pet. v. 5, 6.

(2.) The other effect which the supreme dominion of Almighty God ought to produce in us, is a continual attention to do His will, and exactly to obey His holy commandments. Our obligation to this is a necessary consequence of His dominion and authority over us; and this obligation is so great, that no power in heaven or earth can exempt us from it; we can no more cease to be strictly obliged to obey the commands of God, than we can cease to be His creatures. This obligation is as essential to us as His sovereign dominion is to Him; and the necessity we lie under of complying with it so absolute, that we have nothing to expect but ruin, destruc-

tion, and misery, if we refuse to obey, and rebel against Him. All which will still more clearly appear, if we consider attentively, (1.) That we are His creatures. Whatever we are, whatever we have, we are altogether the work of His hands. He created us, and He created us out of nothing: consequently He has the most absolute power over us, the most incontrovertible right to our obedience, and to every possible service we can do Him; and we are strictly obliged in everything, without exception, to serve and obey Him. Moses speaks with astonishment of the sins of his people, precisely as being an infringement of this supreme title that God has to their obedience as our Creator, and considers their disobedience as the greatest folly. "Is this the return thou makest to the Lord, O foolish and senseless people? Is not He thy Father that made thee, and possessed thee, and created thee? . . . Thou hast forsaken the God that begot thee, and hast forgotten the Lord that created thee," Deut. xxxii. 6, 18. What obligation can any man have to obey those who have dominion over him in this world, equal or comparable to what we have to obey God as our Creator; or what right can an earthly superior have to the service of those under him, equal or comparable to that which the Creator has to the service of His creatures? What is the authority of parents over their children, masters over their servants, kings over their subjects, if compared to the authority which God has over all creatures? All earthly dominion, and all the obedience due to it, is but adventitious, accidental, partial, and temporal; but the dominion of the Creator, and our obligation to obey Him, is essential, indefeasible, universal, and eternal. If, therefore, the disobedience of subjects be a great injury to their earthly superiors, the injury done to the Almighty Creator, by

our disobedience and transgression of His sacred laws, must be very great indeed. What higher title can a man have to the use and service of anything, than he has to that of the work of his own hands? The gardener has a perfect right to the fruits of his garden; the husbandman to the produce of his land; the builder of a house, to the use and rents of the house which he builds; the merchant to the profits of his commerce. Now we are wholly the work of God: He made us what we are—He created our very substance out of nothing; everything we have belongs to Him—we are altogether His undoubted property;—how incontestable, then, must His right be to all service and obedience from us! and how great our obligation to serve and obey Him!

But, (2.) We must further consider that God, by His almighty power, not only created us, but He still continues, by the same power, every moment to preserve us; insomuch, that should He withdraw His hand from us for an instant, that instant we should immediately return to our primitive nothing: for as the light of the day so essentially depends upon the sun, that if the sun should cease to shine, that instant light would cease to exist, so we, and all we have, so entirely depend upon the continual preservation of God, that the moment He should cease to support us, we would cease to be: for "He upholdeth all things by the word of His power," Heb. i. 3; "By Him all things consist," Col. i. 17; and "how could anything endure," says the wise man, "if Thou wouldst not? or be preserved, if not called by Thee?" Wis. xi. 26. God is a self-existent being, perfectly sufficient for Himself, and absolutely independent of any other; but we, and all creatures, have no being of ourselves—we are nothing, and depend upon Him for our very existence. How immensely does this increase

our subjection to Him, and our strict obligation to serve and obey Him! And as we wholly depend upon Him for our existence, so we equally depend upon Him for everything else without exception. It is God "Who covereth the heaven with clouds, and prepareth rain for the earth; Who maketh grass to grow on the mountains, and herbs *for the service of man;* Who giveth to beasts their food, and to the young ravens who call upon Him," Ps. cxlvi. 8. And therefore, "The eyes of all hope in Thee, O Lord, and Thou givest them meat in due season; Thou openest Thy hand, and fillest with Thy blessing every living creature," Ps. cxliv. 15. What Thou givest to them, they shall gather up; when Thou openest Thy hand, they shall all be filled with good: but if Thou turnest away Thy face, they shall be troubled; Thou shalt take away their breath, and they shall fail, and shall return to their dust," Ps. ciii. 28. See here what an immense dependence we have upon God for everything, and consequently how immense our obligation is to serve and obey Him! Nay, whatever powers or faculties we have, whether of soul or body, are all the work of the great God; they are given us by Him—He can take them from us when He pleases, and they so essentially depend upon him, that without his concurrence we could not exercise them—no, not for a moment; "Without Me," says Jesus Christ, "you can do nothing," John, xv. 5—not so much as think a thought, nor speak a word, nor move either hand or foot. If a house be once built by the builder, it stands in no further need of the workman's hand for its preservation; if the seed be once thrown into the ground, it stands in no further need of the sower for its growth, and the production of its fruit; if a watch be once finished by the workman, and wound up, it suffices by itself to continue its motion: but we

have such an absolute dependence upon the hand that made us, that we can neither exist, increase, act, nor move, without His continual conservation and assistance. Who can conceive the extent of this total dependence on God? Judge, then, how immense our obligation must be to serve and obey Him!

Yet this is not all; for, (3.) The very end for which we have our being—the design that God had in creating us, and for which He made and preserves us—is to serve and obey Him. Our blessed Saviour says of Himself: "I came down from heaven, not to do My own will, but to do the will of Him that sent Me," John, vi. 38. And it is no less true of us, that we were created by Almighty God, and are placed by Him in this world, not to do our own will, but the will of Him that created us. God created this world and all things in it, not out of any necessity, nor through force, but out of His own free choice, because He was pleased to do so, and for such ends and uses as He thought proper to assign to every creature, that all might concur, in their respective spheres, to this ultimate and supreme end to give Him pleasure and glory. "Every one," says He, "that calleth upon My name, I have created him for My glory," Isa. xliii. 7. And every creature promotes this glory of the Creator by faithfully performing those effects for which He made them. Thus the sun was created to glorify God by giving light and heat; the water by serving to cool and refresh; the earth by producing nourishment to man and beast; and man was created to glorify God by serving and obeying Him. This is the very end of his being; he exists only for this purpose. But what an infinite obligation does this lay upon him to comply with his end! How indispensable is his duty to serve and obey his Creator! Whenever a thing is designed

exclusively for one particular end, and either does not or cannot fulfil that end, it is good for nothing — it exists to no purpose. If the sun should cease to give light and heat, the water to cool and refresh, and the earth to produce food for man and beast, what would be their use? to what purpose would they serve? They might as well not be. So man, if he refuse to serve and obey God, is good for nothing; whatever else he does is to no purpose: he is worthless in the eyes of his Creator. And, on the other hand, as everything is more perfect in its kind, and more excellent, the more truly it accomplishes the end of its being, so the more perfectly man complies with the noble end for which he is created by serving God, the more excellent he is; and hence the wise man says, "Fear God, and keep His commandments, for this is all man," Eccles. xii. 13; that is, his whole business, his whole duty, his highest perfection, his only happiness—*his all!*

Add to all this, (4.) The absolute necessity we all lie under of complying with this end of our being, by serving and obeying God, as otherwise we cannot escape the effects of His justice and vengeance: "The Lord hath made all things for Himself," Prov. xvi. 4; that is, for His own pleasure and glory. This is the great, the supreme, the ultimate end which the Almighty has in view in all His works; and in the accomplishment of this, it is impossible He should be ever disappointed. To this great end we must all contribute for eternity. We can no more be dispensed with in this than we can cease to be creatures. But here lies the vast difference: if we cheerfully comply with the end of our existence, by carefully serving Him and keeping His commandments, we shall be happy for ever in the enjoyment of God Himself in heaven, glorifying His infinite goodness

and mercy; but if we refuse to serve and obey Him here, we shall be condemned to the eternal torments of hell hereafter, there for ever to remain the victims of His justice. One of the two must be our fate; glorify Him we must, either in heaven as trophies of His mercy, or in hell as victims of His eternal vengeance. By serving and obeying Him here we shall secure the former; but if we disobey His holy commandments here, the latter must be our fate for ever! For God is a "God Whose wrath no man can resist, and under Whom they stoop that bear up the world," Job, ix. 13. "Thou are terrible," says David to Him, "and who can resist Thee from the time that Thy wrath shall break out? Thou hast caused judgment to be heard from heaven: the earth trembled and was still," Ps. lxxv. 8. Neither is it possible for sinners to fly from His avenging justice: "There shall be no flight for them," says God Himself; "and I will slay the last of them with the sword. They shall flee, and he that shall flee of them shall not be delivered. Though they go down even to hell, thence shall My hand bring them out; and though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down; and though they be hid in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them away from thence; and though they hide themselves from My eyes in the depth of the sea, there will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them: and if they go into captivity before their enemies, there will I command the sword, and it shall kill them. And I will set My eyes upon them for evil, and not for good," Amos, ix. 1. Oh! how terrible it is to fall into the hands of this avenging God! How great, then, our obligation to serve and obey Him!

Section III.

Of God's Dominion of Property over all Creatures.

Q. 16. What is the *dominion of property?*

A. It is the authority and right which one has to the possession and the use of anything that belongs to him, so that no other can deprive him of it without a crime, and he himself is at full liberty to use it as he pleases—to sell it, to destroy it, or dispose of it in any other way, without being accountable to any one for his conduct. This kind of dominion belongs to every man with regard to those things which are entirely his own property.

Q. 17. Has God this dominion of property over all creatures?

A. He has, in the most unlimited manner; so that they, and everything that belongs to them, are wholly the property of God; He is their sole Lord and Master—He can do with them what He pleases; none can hinder, none resist Him—nor can any one find fault with what He does, or say, Why dost thou so? He is absolute and independent in whatever way He chooses to treat them; accountable to none for His conduct. This the royal prophet humbly acknowledges in these terms: "Blessed art thou, O Lord, the God of Israel our father, from eternity to eternity. Thine, O Lord, is magnificence, and power, and glory, and victory; and to Thee is praise; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Thine: Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art above all princes: Thine are riches, and Thine is glory: Thou hast dominion over all; in Thy hand is power and might; in Thy hand greatness and the empire of all things," 1 Chron. xxix. 10.

This dominion of God the haughty Nabuchodonosor

confessed in the most humble manner, after having experienced its effects: "And I praised and glorified Him who liveth for ever and ever; for His power is everlasting power, and His kingdom is to all generations: all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing before Him; for He doth according to His will, as well with the powers of heaven as among the inhabitants of the earth; and there is none that can resist His hand, or say to Him, Why hast Thou done it?" Dan. iv. 31, 32. This also was a source of comfort and confidence to the good Mordecai; for when he and all the people of Israel were upon the brink of destruction, from the malice of the wicked Haman, he had recourse to God for deliverance, and began his prayer in this manner: "O Lord God, Almighty King, for all things are in Thy power, and there is none that can resist Thy will, if Thou determine to save Israel. Thou hast made heaven and earth, and all things that are under the cope of heaven: Thou art Lord of all, and there is none that can resist Thy Majesty," Esth. xiii. 9.

Q. 18. On what is this dominion of property, which Almighty God has over all creatures, founded?

A. On the same grounds with His dominion of jurisdiction—namely, His being our Creator, our Preserver, and our last End. And, indeed, (1.) with regard to our creation and preservation, who does not see what an indisputable right this gives to God to do with us whatever He pleases? Over what property can one exercise an absolute right if not over the work of his own hands? If a painter paints a picture—if a sculptor forms a statue—if an artist of any kind makes a piece of work proper to his art, has he not full power over it? If the painter should tear or burn his picture—if the sculptor should grind his statue to powder, could any one call them

to an account for their conduct? The ready answer of each would be, *It is my own; I can do with it what I please.* Or could the picture itself, or the statue, if it had speech, complain of such treatment? If it did, would not the artist justly reply, I have done you no wrong. You had your being as a picture or statue from me; it was my own; and cannot I take my own again from you when I please? And who could gainsay his words?

Now, if this be the very nature of property, and especially over the works of one's own hands, who can conceive the supreme power that God has over us as our Creator? and still more from the continual and essential dependence we have on him as the preserver of our being? Though the painter lays colour on the canvas, and draws the figure and form of the picture, yet he did not make the colours themselves, nor give the canvas its existence; though the sculptor carves the wood or stone, yet he did not create the substance of the wood, nor give being to the stone; but God not only gives us the figure and form we have, and whatever else we possess, but He gives us our very substance—our very existence—our being: He makes us what we are, not out of any independent matter, but He creates the very matter itself of which we are composed *out of nothing!* We have nothing but what is wholly His gift; and as we cannot subsist one instant without him, so we, and all that we have, and all things else, still continue His absolute property, and wholly dependent upon him. Consequently, in whatever way He is pleased to treat us, He does us no injury. If He bestow any gift or benefit on us, it is the effect of His pure liberality, without any right or title on our part to claim it; and in giving it to us, He does not give up His title, but can, without the least shadow of

injustice, take it from us when He wills. If He bestow His gifts more upon one than another, who can find fault with Him? He does no injury to those that receive less. "Is it not lawful for Me," says He, "to do with My own what I will?" Mat. xx. 15. What do I owe you? what did I ever receive from you? "Who hath given me before, that I should repay him? All things that are under heaven are Mine," Job, xli. 2. "The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, saith the Lord of hosts," Hag. ii. 9. "Behold the heaven is the Lord thy God's, and the heaven of heaven, the earth, and all things that are therein," Deut. x. 14. "The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and He will give it to whomsoever it shall please Him, and He will appoint the basest man over it," Dan. iv. 14. In like manner if He should reduce us to poverty, afflict us with pain, oppress us with sickness, overwhelm us with miseries—who shall dare to complain? or who has a right to oppose Him? "Cannot I do with you as the potter, O house of Israel, said the Lord. Behold, as clay is in the hand of the potter, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel," Jer. xviii. 6. "O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Or hath not the potter power over the clay—of the same lump to make one vessel into honour, and another into dishonour?" Rom. ix. 20. "The potter tempering soft clay, with labour fashioneth every vessel for our service, and of the same clay he maketh both vessels that are for clean use, and likewise such as serve to the contrary; but what is the use of these vessels the potter is the judge," Wis. xv. 7. And who shall then dare to find fault with the Almighty, whatever way He shall be pleased to treat us? "Woe to him that gainsayeth his Maker, a shred of the earthen pots:

shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What art thou making? and thy work is without hands?" Isa. xlv. 9.

But, (2.) This will still further appear, if we reflect on what we have seen above, that we are created only for God—that we have our existence only for His service and pleasure—that the very end of our being is to do His will. Thus all the saints in heaven continually cry out to Him, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created," Rev. iv. 11. This fact necessarily involves an absolute, intrinsic, and perpetual subordination to the will and pleasure of God; so that, no matter what service He may exact, or what sacrifice demand, we can have no reason to complain that He does us any wrong, or requires too much from us; for how can we complain of being employed or used in that for which alone we were created, and for which alone we have our being? And hence, should He be pleased to overturn the whole world, to annihilate all creatures, to reduce us to ashes, who can find fault? He only uses His own just right; creatures have their being only from Him; He has the most perfect title to do with them what He pleases. Hence, "if He shall overturn all things, or shall press them together, who shall contradict Him?" Job, xi. 10; and "if He examine on a sudden, who shall answer Him? or who can say, Why dost Thou so?" Job, ix. 12.

But to put this matter in its proper light, let us consider the right that man has to use all the inferior creatures as he pleases, precisely because they were created for his use and service. For when God proposed to create man He said, "Let us create man to Our image and likeness; and let him have dominion over the fishes

of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and the beasts, and the whole earth, and every creeping thing that moveth upon the earth." And when He had created him He gave him this dominion in these words: "Rule over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and all living creatures that move upon the earth. Behold I have given you every herb bearing seed upon the earth, and all trees that have in themselves seed of their own kind, to be your meat;" Gen. i. 26. Here then we see that the common Creator of all things was pleased to make these inferior creatures for the use of man—that this is the immediate end of their being; and consequently he has received from his Maker a dominion of property over them. Now, how does he use this right? He uses it in every way he pleases—in whatever manner he sees can contribute to his service, convenience, pleasure, or amusement, without regarding the suffering or pain to which his doing so may expose these creatures. Some of them he deprives of their natural liberty for his amusement; he uses one kind of them to hunt after, pursue, and kill others for his pleasure; some he loads with heavy burdens for his service; others he condemns to hard and daily labour for his work; others he kills, using them for food. Now, if by treating them in this manner he does them no injury—if he only uses his own right given him by their and his own common Creator, although he neither is the author of their being nor the ultimate end for which they were created, and although the right he has to their service is not essential to him but only given him by another—how infinitely greater is the right of the supreme Lord of all to dispose of us as He pleases, and do with us whatever He wills, seeing we have our very being from Him, and that the ultimate, essential, and necessary end of our being is to serve and please Him? There

is an infinitely greater distance between God and man than between man and the meanest insect; and He has an infinitely greater right to do with us what He pleases, than we can possibly have to do according to our will with the most worthless of the creatures. And though He should require the most severe service from us, though He should command us to be burnt alive or crucified for His honour, we could have no more reason to complain of Him as unjust or cruel for doing so than the ox or the sheep could complain of us for slaying and eating them. The just answer to such complaints from them would be, that they were made for our use, and have their being for that end; and the same answer, but with infinitely greater reason, Almighty God would make to any such complaints from us,—"You have your being for no other end but to contribute to My pleasure!"

Q. 19. What consequences flow from this supreme dominion of property which God has over us?

A. A great and most important duty flows as a necessary consequence from this truth—namely, that we ought to be penetrated with dread and reverential awe of this tremendous Sovereign, Who has us so absolutely in His power, and on Whom we so essentially depend. We ought not only to make it the whole study and the continual employment of our life to please and serve Him, by faithfully obeying His commandments, which is the very end for which He gives us our being; but also, amidst all the sufferings and crosses He may be pleased to send upon us in this our mortal life, of whatever kind and from whatever immediate source they flow, we ought to preserve our souls in perfect resignation to His holy will, to receive these trials with submission from His hand, and to suppress every motion of discontent, repining, or murmuring under them. We ought to remember that He alone

is our absolute Lord and Master, and that in whatever way it is His will and pleasure to deal with us, He only uses His own right; that we have our existence for no other end but to contribute to His pleasure and do His will, whatever it may cost us; that He can never be unjust, or cruel, or injurious to us, whatever way He treats us; but we are highly unjust and injurious to Him, and counteract the very end of our creation, when we repine or murmur against Him, and refuse to serve Him in the way in which He desires our service. Wherefore, in the midst of all our afflictions, however grievous, whether in soul or body —whether of a public or private nature—whether in our goods, persons, or reputation, the thought that He who sends them upon us is our sovereign Lord ought to keep down every rising of our passions or impatience, and make us receive them all with the most profound humility and resignation. Indeed, if the extrinsic adventitious dominion which man has over the inferior creatures, given to him by their common Creator, authorises him to use them according to his pleasure, without regard to what it may cost them; how much more must the absolute, essential, and independent dominion which God has over us, entitle Him to do with us whatever He pleases? and how much ought this supreme right of God to suppress all murmuring on our part, whatever trials or afflictions He may send us? Such, in reality, was the effect which this consideration produced in all the holy servants of God in the midst of their severest trials. Thus when Job was reduced in a few hours from the greatest opulence to the most abject poverty, when he lost all his children at once by a violent death, and was himself afflicted with a most loathsome disease: "In all these things Job sinned not by his lips, nor spoke he any foolish thing against God; but fell down upon the ground

and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: as it has pleased the Lord, so is it done; blessed be the name of the Lord," Job i. 21. In like manner, when the venerable high priest Eli was told by Samuel the prophet all the evils that were to come upon his family, he heard the whole without the least emotion, and at the end he expressed himself in the most submissive manner: "It is the Lord, let Him do what is good in His sight," 1 Kings (Sam.), iii. 18. David was remarkable for his profound submission to this sovereign dominion of God, insomuch that when he was flying from the face of his rebel son Absalom, in great distress and affliction, and Semei came out against him and cursed him in a most outrageous manner, and one of David's officers said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse the king? I will go and cut off his head;" David, considering Semei's behaviour as a trial sent him from God, replied, "Let him alone, and let him curse; the Lord hath bid him curse David, and who is he that shall say, Why hath He done so?" 2 Kings (Sam.), xvi. 9. Also upon this same occasion of his flying from Absalom, when he sent back the ark of God to the city of Jerusalem, he said, "If I shall find grace in the sight of the Lord, He will bring me again, and will show me both it and his tabernacle. But if He shall say to me, Thou pleasest me not: I am ready; let Him do that which is good before Him," 2 Kings (Sam.), xv. 25. And he tells us that this was his general conduct upon all such occasions: "Thou hast made me a reproach to the fool: I was dumb and I opened not my mouth; because Thou hast done it," Ps. xxxviii. 9. Jesus Christ Himself, the King of saints, when oppressed in the garden with grief and sorrow, so as to fall into an

agony and sweat of blood, cried indeed to His Father, if it were possible to remove from Him the cup of His passion; but immediately added, with a most profound submission, "Yet not My will, but Thine be done." And when afterwards St Peter drew his sword to defend Him, He expressly forbade him, would allow no resistance, and gave this reason,—"The chalice which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" John, xviii. 11. In a word, such was the practice of all the saints of God, and in it they found a great consolation in all their sufferings. So also shall it be with us, if by frequent and serious meditation on the supreme dominion which Almighty God has over us and all creatures, and the total subjection we owe to Him, we endeavour, on all occasions, to resign ourselves to His holy will, and to pay that entire submission to His sovereign authority, and the dispositions of His holy providence, which they so justly deserve, and which our duty so strictly requires from us.

Q. 20. As God has such an unlimited power and authority over us, does He use it in an arbitrary and despotic manner, and treat us with harshness and severity?

A. Far from it; nothing can be more engaging than the tenderness and affection with which He exercises His dominion over us. If He lays some commands upon us, He is careful that they are just and reasonable in themselves, and such as will tend to our real happiness; if He requires us to mortify our irregular passions, He does so because He knows they are the greatest enemies of our peace, and that our indulging them would make us miserable: the service He requires from us is exceedingly moderate, is of no manner of use to Himself, can add nothing to His happiness; its whole tendency is to

our good, and yet He rewards it in the most ample manner, as if he had reaped some great advantage from it. He treats us not as servants but as children, assuring us that He has the bowels of a father towards us, that His love for us exceeds that of the tenderest mother for her darling child. He knows our weakness, has compassion on our miseries, and treats our frailties with the greatest indulgence; even when we offend Him, He pities and spares us, and is ready to receive us again with open arms on our repentance. See how beautifully the Scripture declares this His admirable disposition towards us! "Great power always belonged to Thee alone, and who shall resist the strength of Thy arm? . . . But Thou hast mercy upon all, because Thou canst do all things; and winkest at the sins of men, for the sake of repentance. For Thou lovest all things that are, and hatest none of the things which Thou hast made; for Thou didst not appoint or make anything hating it. . . . But Thou sparest all because they are Thine, O Lord, Who lovest souls," Wis. xi. 22. "For so much then as Thou art just, Thou orderest all things justly, thinking it not agreeable to Thy power to condemn him who deserveth not to be punished. For Thy power is the beginning of justice; and because Thou art Lord of all, Thou makest Thyself gracious to all: . . . for Thou, being master of power, judgest with equity, and with great favour disposest of us," Wis. xii. 15. Oh! what sentiments of gratitude and love ought this to excite in our souls towards so bountiful a Master! Let us only consider seriously, and have a lively sense imprinted in our souls of *who He is*, and *who we are!* how absolute His power, and how unlimited our subjection! how infinite His dominion, and how total our dependence! what He might justly demand from us, and what

He does require of us! and we cannot fail to be convinced of our strict obligation to serve and obey Him to the ûtmost of our power, and to submit with the most profound respect and resignation to every dispensation of His providence.

Q. 21. Whence arises our duty in gratitude to obey God?

A. From His infinite love towards us, and the wonderful effects of this love, in the benefits He has bestowed, and daily does bestow upon us.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE INEFFABLE GOODNESS AND LOVE OF GOD TOWARDS MAN, AND OUR DUTY IN GRATITUDE TO KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS.

Q. 1. WHAT things are chiefly to be considered in explaining the goodness and love of God to man?

A. They are all comprehended by St Paul under four heads—namely, The length, the breadth, the height, and depth of His love; and the apostle earnestly prays for his beloved Ephesians, that they may have a full sense and comprehension of the infinite goodness of God in all these its four dimensions. "I bow my knee," says he, "to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, . . . being rooted and founded in charity, you may be able to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length, and height and depth; to know also the charity of Christ, which surpasseth all knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fulness of God," Eph. iii. 14, 17. In which words he declares that this holy knowledge of the love of God and of Christ is the powerful means to fill us with *the fulness of God*—that is, to implant in our souls all heavenly virtues and graces. In souls so filled God dwells, and satiates every

power and faculty with the sweets of His Divine presence; to them the commandments present no difficulty, for charity, in which they are "founded and rooted," makes all things easy.

Section I.

Of the Length of the Love of God.

Q. 2. What is meant by the *length of the love of God?*

A. By this is meant its *eternal duration.* Great honour would it be for us, had Almighty God loved us only from the first moment of our existence, when we were formed in our mother's womb; but His love for us was before we had a being; and what He said to His prophet Jeremiah is true of every one of us,—"Before I formed thee in the bowels of thy mother I knew thee," Jer. i. 5. Still more honourable for us would have been His love had it begun with the creation of the world; but it was prior to that also: even before the world began we were present in the mind of God; before He created the heavens or the earth He knew us, and we were the objects of His love; so that each of us may say with truth, what the Divine Wisdom says of itself, "The depths were not as yet, and I was already conceived; . . . the mountains with their huge bulk had not yet been established; before the hills I was brought forth," Prov. viii. 24. I was conceived in the knowledge of the Almighty, and brought forth in the resolution which His love for me had taken to bring me in due time into being; even then He had appointed to heap His benefits upon me, to choose me to be a member of His holy Church, and to sanctify me by the blood of His Son Jesus; "He hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of

the world, that we should be holy and unspotted in His sight in charity," Eph. i. 4. But how long before the foundation of the world did God know and love us? Oh! here no period can be assigned: the knowledge and love of God are as essential as Himself; what He knows and loves in time, He knew and loved from eternity. From eternity, then, we were present in the mind of God; from eternity He loved us; from eternity He decreed to bring us into being in time; to draw us out of the nothingness in which we then were, and to bestow upon us all those admirable effects of His love, compassion, and goodness, which, since the first moment of our existence we have actually received. "I have loved thee," says He Himself, "with an everlasting love; therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee," Jer. xxxi. 3. Oh! what an amazing idea does it give us of the love of God, to reflect that so great a Being, perfectly happy in Himself, and Who had not the smallest need of us, should from all eternity have been employed in thinking of and loving such poor ungrateful creatures! What return can we make for such eternal goodness? How incumbent is it on us to employ our thoughts on so loving an object, and to study to love and serve Him, and to obey His holy commands!

Section. II.

Of the Breadth of Divine Love.

Q. 3. What is meant by the *breadth of the love of God* for us?

A. By this is meant the extension of His benevolence towards us, which embraces all that immensity of bene-

fits and favours which His love for us leads Him daily to bestow upon us here; and the still greater happiness which He has prepared for us hereafter. For to love is, properly speaking, to wish well and do good to the beloved object; and as doing good is the most convincing proof of the sincerity of our love, so the more excellent the good we do, and the more numerous the benefits we confer, the more is shown the greatness of our love. In this view the benevolence or goodwill of God to man is no less infinite in extent than eternal in duration; for it embraces all possible goods in the order of nature, grace, and glory, both for soul and body, for time and eternity; some of which He actually bestows on all mankind, and others which He desires to give, and would give, did not we ourselves, by the perversity of our hearts, put a hindrance to the designs of His mercy.

Q. 4. What is understood by the *goods in the order of nature?*

A. Those benefits of God which we enjoy as human creatures, and which are common to mankind in general. Now, concerning these, the following particulars are chiefly to be considered.—*First, our very being itself*, which is wholly the gift of God; for the share our parents had in bringing us into existence is too trifling to be named; they neither created the soul, nor did they form our body. They did not even know whether we were to come to light or not. Of this the holy mother of the seven Maccabees was very sensible when, exhorting her sons to suffer martyrdom, she reminded them that they owed their whole being to God alone, and that if they lost it for His sake, He would again restore it; but as for me, "I know not how you were formed in my womb; for I neither gave you breath, nor soul, nor life, nor did

I frame the limbs of every one of you. But the Creator of the world formed the nativity of man," 2 Mac. vii. 22. Now this benefit of our existence is a favour far exceeding any other natural good we can enjoy; it is indeed the foundation of all good, since, without it, we can enjoy no other: hence our Saviour says, "Is not the life more than meat, and the body more than raiment?" Mat. vi. 25; and do we not cheerfully part with everything to preserve our life when it is in danger? even to preserve or recover any of our senses or faculties which are necessary for the welfare of our *being?* Now, if we are so much indebted to our parents, who were mere instruments in the hands of God, what must our obligation be to the Almighty who created our soul out of nothing, formed our members, gave us our senses, powers, and faculties, an understanding to know Him, a heart to love Him, and, in short, everything we are or have? what return of gratitude can we make bearing the smallest proportion to what we owe Him? How indispensable then must be our duty to make at least all the return we can by loving Him, serving Him, and obeying His holy commandments! But in order to see the greatness of this benefit in its proper light, we must consider the following particulars.

The first is, that in bestowing this favour, Almighty God, out of His pure goodness and predilection, gave us the preference over many others whom He could have brought into being, but who never were and never will be brought to light. How highly favoured are we by this election! What singular privilege is here shown to us! The question was of bestowing one of the greatest of favours; the number capable of receiving it was infinite; none had the smallest merit which could entitle them to a preference over others: all were upon a perfect

equality; all were equally nothing. Why then exclude such infinite numbers and favour us? why give us the preference to them? To this no answer can be given, but that it was the goodwill and pleasure of God to do so; it was the sole effect of His love for us, preferring us to so many thousands. But how greatly does this predilection on the part of God increase our obligation to Him! What an immense favour was done to Noah and his family when they were saved from the common destruction in which all the rest of mankind was involved! How great was the predilection shown to Lot, in delivering him alone when all his fellow-citizens in Sodom were consumed! How great, then, the love shown to us by Almighty God, in bringing us into *being*, in preference to so many others, and extricating us from that eternal nothingness in which millions of possible creatures must remain for ever! Especially when we reflect that Noah and Lot were good men, friends and servants of God, untainted by the crimes which brought such a judgment on the others; but we had no merit, no claim, no title, which could in the smallest degree move God to give us the preference.

The second consideration on this matter is this: that instead of having any merit on our part to move God to prefer us to others, and bring us into *being*, there were the strongest reasons against it—namely, the numberless crimes and injuries which we have committed against Him since we had our *being;* the abuse of that free-will with which He has endowed us, which is the highest ornament of our nature; and our unparalleled ingratitude in making use of our members, powers, and faculties, and of the numberless benefits He has bestowed upon us, as so many arms by which to insult and offend Him. All this He foresaw distinctly before He created

us, yea, He saw it from all eternity; for "the works of all flesh are before Him, and there is nothing hid from His eyes; He seeth from eternity to eternity, and there is nothing wonderful before Him," Ecclus. xxxix. 24. Yet nothing of all this was able to hinder the effects of His predilection for us. "I see," said He, "the injuries such an one will do if I create him: I see he will abuse his faculties both of soul and body to My dishonour; nevertheless let My goodness triumph over his ingratitude. I will create him preferably to others, though I know that many of these others would be more faithful and grateful to Me." Here we see a prodigy of love beyond all example, and which, if we have any feeling in our heart, cannot fail to fill it with affections of the most sensible gratitude towards so merciful and bounteous a father. Add to all this, that He not only gave us our *being*, but continues to renew the same gift every moment of our existence by His continual preservation, without which we should in an instant return to our original nothingness: and though our daily sins against Him justly deserve that He should abandon us and reduce us again to non-existence, yet His infinite goodness still bears with our infidelity, and preserves us in life, giving us time and grace for repentance.

Lastly, He not only preserves us in *being*, but continues to us all our senses, powers, and faculties, and co-operates with us in even the smallest use we make of any of them; for as without His preservation we could not exist for a single moment, so without His continual co-operation we could not move hand, foot, or tongue, nor use any one of those faculties which He has given us; for "it is He Who giveth to all life, and breath, and all things," and it is "in Him we live, and move,

and have our being," Acts, xvii. 25, 28; and therefore the prophet Isaiah says, "Lord, Thou hast wrought all our works for us," Isa. xxvi. 12. What stupendous goodness is here again displayed! what a total dependence have we upon our God! what a faithful and assiduous assistance does He give us! But what return of gratitude do we owe to Him for it!

If now, in the *second place*, we leave this little world of our own *being*, and view the great world around us, what amazing effects of the infinite goodness of God do we everywhere behold! Wherever we turn our eyes we see evidence of His love: every creature we perceive about us is a proof of His goodwill towards us; every creature co-operates to serve us, to supply our wants, to relieve our necessity, or to afford us some convenience or comfort, and every one displays the beneficence of God in creating it for that purpose. The heavenly bodies, in their unwearied course, enlighten our habitation, and were created "to shine in the firmament of heaven, to divide the day and the night; for signs and for seasons, and for days and for years," Gen. i. 14. Who can enumerate the benefits derived from fire, water, and the air? What innumerable services do we receive from the earth, both in the vast variety of plants, trees, herbs, and fruits, which it produces on its surface, and in the manifold mineral treasures it contains? What shall we say of the living creatures which yield us food and raiment in such abundance and variety, and contribute in so many ways to our pleasure and enjoyment? All these things the goodness of God created for the service of man, whom "He set over the works of His hands; He subjected all things under His feet, all sheep and oxen; moreover the beasts also of the field, the birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea that pass through the

paths of the sea," Ps. viii. 7, that all might contribute to his happiness, and convince him of the unbounded extent of the Divine goodness towards him. Let us look around and see if there be any one thing we need that He has not provided for us. What excess of love has not God shown to us even in the minutest things! What gratitude and love, then, ought not we to return to Him for such unmerited goodness!

Not only does His love appear in the manifold benefits He heaps upon us by means of the inferior creation, but still more in the numberless favours which, by the disposition of His providence, our fellow-creatures are made the instruments of bestowing upon us. What shall we say of the care and attention paid to our wellbeing by our parents in our infant state, when we are totally unable to assist ourselves? what of the benefits of society, in which kings and princes, magistrates and rulers, are employed by His Divine providence to defend the weak, to secure property, and protect us from injury? What shall we say of that strict command He lays upon all, to *love their neighbour as themselves;* and the powerful motive to enforce it,—*what we do to the least of our brethren, He esteems as done to Himself?* But what is still more surprising, His providence has established such a connection among mankind as to lay us under the necessity of helping and serving one another, insomuch that we cannot promote our own welfare without at the same time contributing to that of others, even of those we never saw, and of those that are yet unborn. It is delightful to reflect on this, and to consider what multitudes of men the goodness of God makes use of to serve us. Take an instance in the bread we eat. How many of our fellow-creatures have been employed to prepare it for our use? How many in tilling the ground,

sowing the seed, reaping the grain, and in preparing it for food? How many artists have been employed in preparing the necessary instruments for each of these to perform their respective parts in such a multiplicity of labour? Nor is this all: the seed itself could not have been sown, if it had not been provided by the labour and industry of others, and that in a continued succession of husbandmen, and of all the various artists necessary for their work, from the very beginning of the world. What an amazing idea does not this give of the wonderful providence of God, and of His goodness towards us in thus employing for our benefit such multitudes of our brethren who know nothing of us, and who lived ages before we were in existence! He has so disposed that in serving themselves they should also benefit us, and the same is true in regard of everything else we enjoy; in the production of food, drink, and clothing, in the various arts and sciences, in the studies of the learned, in the good books they publish, and in everything else that any one does for the good and benefit of mankind. What infinite obligations, then, do we not lie under to our great Creator, Who has so beneficently disposed all things for our good! Truly, "The Lord is sweet to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works!" Ps. cxliv. 9.

Great indeed, and admirable, are all these effects of the Divine goodness; but they do not stop here. Not only has He ordained all the visible creatures about us for our service, but He even employs His heavenly spirits, those beings of such superior excellence, to be our guardians and attendants, to guide and direct us, to protect us from our enemies, and to defend us from many dangers; "There shall no evil come unto thee," *says the royal prophet*, "nor shall the scourge come near thy dwelling;

for He hath given His angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways; in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone," Ps. xc. 10. And "are they not all ministering spirits," says St Paul, "sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?" Heb. i. 14. What an exalted idea does this give us of the boundless love of God towards us, when we consider *who they are who are sent to guard us; who He is that sends them*, and *for what end!* Oh! how greatly are we honoured by such goodness! how great is our obligation, then, to correspond with it, by a faithful obedience to His holy commandments!

Such, then, are the general effects of the Divine goodness towards all mankind; for "He makes His sun to rise on the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and unjust," Mat. v. 45. It is true, in the division of these common benefits, He distributes them in different degrees, giving to some more and to others less; but even this He does for the most beneficent purposes, according as He sees most proper for the good of the receivers. And even this unequal division of benefits gives us another just occasion to see the particular goodness of God in our own regard by considering how liberal He has been to us, above many others. How many of our brethren do we find deprived of goods which we enjoy, and subjected to many sufferings, from which we are free? Some suffer under lingering and painful diseases, others are reduced to extreme poverty, and forced to seek their bread from the charity of others. Let us cast our eyes on such, and ask ourselves, Why are these so miserable and I so happy? why so many good things to me, and so few to them? perhaps my sins deserve much worse than theirs, and yet God treats me with such lenity and mercy! What ample grounds to admire and

adore the infinite goodness of God to us, and to excite in our hearts the most sensible affections of gratitude and love to Him!

Nor must we imagine that, because these common effects of the Divine goodness were made for all mankind in general, therefore God has not any special regard for each of us in particular. His Holy Word assures us that "He made the great and the small, and hath *equally* care for all," Wis. vi. 8; that "not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your heavenly Father, or is forgotten before God;" yea, that "the very hairs of our head are all numbered," Mat. x. 29, 30; Luke, xxi. 18. The goodness of God extends to each one in particular, no less than to all in general; and when He gave being to all the other creatures for the use of man, He had each individual before His eyes, in regard to the proportion of those benefits He intended for him, as distinctly as He had the whole; so that each one of us in particular can say with the greatest truth, what the Divine Wisdom says of itself in another sense, "When He prepared the heaven, I was there; when with a certain law and compass He prepared the depths—when He established the sky above, and poised the fountains of waters—when He compassed the sea with its bounds, and set a law to the waters, that they should not pass their limits—when He balanced the foundations of the earth, I was with Him," Prov. viii. 27. Though I had not then received existence, yet I was distinctly present to His infinite knowledge as the end of that great work, for whose use and service He created it; and on the same ground it is that, though Christ died for all men universally, yet St Paul applies His death no less entirely to himself than if He had died for him alone. "I live in the faith of the Son of God," said he, "Who loved *me*, and delivered Himself

for *me*," Gal. ii. 20. How endearing a consideration is this! and what an affecting motive does it afford to excite us still more to love and serve that good and gracious God, Who shows such special love and kindness to each of us in particular! Such, then, is the extension or breadth of the love of God to man, considered only in regard to those good things which are in the order of nature. But what an incredible addition does it receive when to these are joined those more excellent goods in the order of grace and glory! But as it is in them that we see the height of the love of God, we shall particularly consider them under that head.

Section III.

The Height of the Love of God.

Q. 5. What is meant by the *height of the love of God?*

A. By this is understood the inconceivable excellence and sublimity of those supernatural effects of His love which He bestows upon us in this world by His grace, and has prepared for us in the world to come, in His eternal glory. These are so far superior in value and dignity to all the goods which He bestows on us in the order of nature that they admit of no comparison with them. Besides, they have this advantage, that whereas Almighty God in bestowing natural goods gives us only the use of them, reserving to Himself the full power of withdrawing them at pleasure, in bestowing supernatural goods binds Himself never to withdraw them in this life unless they be rejected or abused, and in the life to come to confirm the possession of them for ever to the faithful soul in His eternal kingdom.

Q. 6. In what does the sublimity of these supernatural goods consist?

A. It consists in this: that by communicating His Divine grace to our souls, He gives us a new manner of existence—a supernatural being—a spiritual dignity, by which we are exalted from the low condition of our native dust and servile state, to the sublime and eminent dignity of being truly the friends of God, His adopted children—partaking, in a most admirable manner, of His Divine nature, and united to Him by the strictest bonds. St Peter, speaking of this effect of Divine grace, says, "He has given us great and precious promises, that by these you may be made partakers of the Divine nature," 2 Pet. i. 4. And the wise man says of it, that "it is a vapour of the power of God, and a certain pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty, and therefore no defiled thing can come near it; that it is the brightness of eternal light, . . . and conveyeth itself into holy souls, and maketh friends of God," Wis. vii. 25. Hence our blessed Saviour says, "I will not now call you servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doth. But I have called you friends, because all things whatsoever I have heard of My Father, I have made known to you," John, xv. 15. Here He not only shows the dignity of being His friends, to which He raises us, but also the intimate manner in which He treats us as His friends by communicating His heavenly truths to us. But the effects of His love do not stop here. By this participation of Himself, which His grace communicates to our souls, he exalts us to that inconceivable dignity of being His adopted children. "Behold," says the beloved disciple, "what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called, and should be the sons of God," 1 John, iii. 1. Now, what human understanding can form any idea of

this exalted dignity, that we, who are by nature *dust and ashes*, and of ourselves *nothing and vanity*, should be so highly honoured as to be not only allowed, but even entitled, to address ourselves to the great, eternal, incomprehensible Being, before whom the *pillars of heaven tremble*, with the confidence and affection of children? "for you have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry, Abba, Father," Rom. viii. 15.

Now this title of sons of God is not an empty dignity, which brings no solid advantage to our souls. It is a privilege which carries with it a full and perfect right to the greatest of all good—to the only real good—the possession of God Himself, and of His eternal glory in His kingdom. "We are the sons of God," says St Paul; "and if sons, heirs also: heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ," Rom. viii. 17. Heirs of that eternal kingdom, in which God Himself is our reward exceeding great! Heirs of that happiness which so far exceeds everything in this world, that it cannot enter into the heart of man to form any conception of it! A happiness which can never be taken from us, and which will never cloy! a kingdom that will never end! where "we all, beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii. 18; and where "we shall be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is," 1 John, iii. 2. So that what David says shall then justly be applied to us: "I have said, You are gods, and all of you the sons of the Most High," Ps. lxxxi. 6: but what human mind, what angelic understanding can form an adequate idea of such an extraordinary favour, such excessive liberality, such sublime benefits, as the infinite love of God

has here bestowed upon us? It has gone so far, that His omnipotence itself can go no further; for what can God Almighty give better or more excellent than Himself? What return of gratitude and love are we not bound to make for such unparalleled goodness? Is there any obedience we can give which can bear the smallest proportion to what we owe Him? And shall we refuse the little we are able? What shocking ingratitude would this be!

But though the infinite goodness of God has prepared these most sublime goods for all mankind, desiring that all should partake of them—for "God will have all mankind to be saved," 1 Tim. ii. 4—yet it is no less true that, through His unsearchable judgments, which are always just and righteous, all mankind are not brought to the actual participation of them; "but He hath mercy on whom He will have mercy," Rom. ix. 15. Hence there opens to our consideration another most affecting view of the infinite love and unspeakable mercy of God to us Christians, in calling us to the knowledge and love of His Son Jesus, and making us members of His holy Church, where we have so many powerful graces and helps to secure the eternal inheritance of His glory; while thousands and thousands of others of the same nature with ourselves are left in ignorance and error, wandering like sheep without a shepherd in the paths that lead to destruction. Oh, here indeed we are lost in wonder and amazement! Whence so singular a predilection for us? Whence so exalted a vocation? Whence that eternal love by which "He hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unspotted in His sight in charity, and by which He hath predestinated us into the adoption of children through Jesus Christ unto Him-

self"? Eph. i. 4. Whence that infinite goodness which "hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us to the kingdom of His beloved Son"? Col. i. 13; which has made us "fellow-citizens with the saints and domestics of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the head corner-stone"? Eph. ii. 19. Whence that amazing bounty, that we should be to God "a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people; that we may declare the praises of Him Who hath called us out of darkness to His admirable light"? 1 Pet. ii. 9. Was there anything in us that could move God to show us such a singular mercy? No. "He hath called us by His holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the times of the world," 2 Tim. i. 9. "Not by the works of justice which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us; . . . that being justified by His grace, we may be heirs, according to hope, of life everlasting," Tit. iii. 5. What an inexhaustible fund of pious meditation upon the unspeakable love of God towards us Christians is here supplied! What motives to excite in our souls the most lively affections of love, gratitude, and praise to our gracious benefactor! What must have been our doom had we not been called to the true faith of Christ! How undeserving are we of such a mercy! How ungrateful have we hitherto been! How many thousands of those who are deprived of it would have made a better use of such a favour! Why then has the Almighty bestowed that mercy upon us, and refused it to them? What do we owe Him for such a distinguished favour? Do or suffer what we may for His sake, will it ever bear any proportion to what we owe Him? How great, then, is

our duty to serve Him! How immense our obligation to keep His holy commandments, and do all we can to please Him!

Section IV.

Of the Depth of the Love of God.

Q. 7. What is meant by the *depth of the love of God?*

A. Love, when sincere and disinterested, is a wonderful affection. When it takes possession of the heart, it uses every means to accomplish its end; bent on doing good to its object, it thinks no treasures too great to bestow, no suffering too severe, no humiliation too mortifying to be undergone for its sake. In the sublime excellence of the treasures bestowed on man by Almighty God, we see the amazing height of His love: in the sufferings and humiliations which He underwent to secure those treasures for us, we see its stupendous depth. To have a clear sense of this dimension of the love of God, we must reflect upon the following truths:—

(1.) The strongest love among men, when despised and disregarded, and especially when it is repaid with injuries, is apt at last to be changed into hatred, and then the very fervour of the affection, magnifying the evil return it has received, sees only incentives to resentment and revenge. Now, where shall we find a love equal or comparable in any respect to the love of God for man? Or where shall we find a love which has been so unworthily returned, so ill repaid, so abused? Notwithstanding the numberless favours which He bestows upon us in order to excite our gratitude, we are unmoved by His goodness, frequently preferring a trifling interest or the gratification of some vile passion

to His holy will. This ingratitude is shown every time we commit mortal sin. And what has been the general conduct of mankind, since the unhappy fall of Adam to this day, but to treat the majesty of God in this unworthy manner? Of this ungrateful behaviour He frequently complains in the most moving terms. "Hear, O ye heavens," says He, "and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken. I have brought up children, and have exalted them, but they have despised Me!" Isa. i. 2. "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and ye gates thereof be very desolate, saith the Lord; for My people have done two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water," Jer. ii. 12. "What is there that I ought to do for My vineyard that I have not done to it? Was it that I looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it hath brought wild grapes?" Isa. v. 4. Now, what might not justly be expected from such shocking ingratitude? Could we wonder if the Almighty should put on all the terrors of His justice to avenge the cause of His ill-requited love? Did He not do so to the rebel angels, creatures of a much more excellent nature than man? Did He not, for their very first offence, disinherit them, divest them of all His graces, and by an irrevocable sentence "deliver them to infernal ropes, drawn down to the lower hell into torments"? 2 Pet. ii. 4. Why has He not treated us in the same manner? Only the excess of His love for us can answer this question. Great indeed must this love be, since the excess of our ingratitude does not extinguish it! Oh, how truly does His Holy Word declare this! "Many waters cannot quench charity, neither can the floods drown it," Cant. viii. 7. No; all that deluge of wickedness which

covers the whole earth does not stop the effects of His goodness towards us: He still continues to heap favours upon us; He bears, with the most inconceivable patience, the innumerable outrages we commit against Him, and "waiteth that He may have mercy upon us!" Isa. xxx. 18.

(2.) Great indeed must that love be which such ingratitude on our part is not able to destroy: even our very ingratitude redoubles its strength, and increases its ardour; so that "where sin abounded, grace hath abounded more," Rom. v. 20. But in nothing does the extent of the love of God appear so manifest as in the admirable means He employed to free us from that eternal misery to which we had been condemned for our rebellion against His holy law. But what means, great God! how stupendous! how unheard of! and how much above what could ever have entered into the heart of man to imagine! Well knowing that every offence committed against Him, from the infinite malice it contains, requires in strict justice a satisfaction of infinite value; and seeing that neither man himself, nor any other pure creature, was able to pay this debt for us; He Himself—O unheard-of goodness! O unbounded love!—He Himself, our offended God, takes upon Himself to pay this debt for us, His ungrateful offenders: and for this purpose "He debases Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of man, and in fashion found as man," and in this, His human nature, "He humbles Himself, becoming obedient to death, even the *painful, ignominious, disgraceful* death of the cross," Philip. ii. 7; and there, with the last drop of His precious blood, discharges the heavy debt of eternal punishment, which we, His ungrateful, outrageous enemies, owed for our sins to the Divine justice! O stupendous effects of Divine love! which

nothing but infinite wisdom could invent, infinite goodness make choice of, and infinite power execute. O excess of charity! so much beyond the utmost reach of the human understanding, that without the supernatural light of Divine faith it must appear a fable, a dream, or incredible chimera! and is indeed "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Gentiles foolishness," 1 Cor. i. 23.

(3.) But who are we for whom the Almighty God shows such amazing love? Alas! "All nations are before Him as if they had no being at all, and are counted to Him as nothing and vanity," Isa. xl. 17. David is astonished that God should so much as remember us. "What is man," says he, "that Thou art mindful of him?" Ps. viii. 5; and in another place,—"Lord, what is man, that Thou art made known to him? or the son of man, that Thou makest account of him? Man is like to vanity; his days pass away like a shadow," Ps. cxliii. 3. Job is no less surprised at such a wonder. "What is man," says he, "that Thou shouldst magnify him? or why dost Thou set Thy heart upon him?" Job, vii. 17. "He cometh forth like a flower, and is destroyed; and fleeth as a shadow, and never continueth in the same state. And dost thou think it meet to open Thy eyes on such an one?" Job, xiv. 2. And yet this God of infinite majesty, Who has no need of man—Who is perfectly happy in Himself without man—not only is mindful of him, has him always in His remembrance; not only makes account of and magnifies him; not only opens His eyes upon him, but sets His heart and love upon him to such a degree, as to open all the veins of His sacred humanity, and shed the last drop of His precious blood to save him!

(4.) Could it have entered into the heart of man to

have asked this of God? Who would ever have dared to say, "O great God, your justice pursues me for my sins; I cannot escape it: I therefore beseech you to come down from heaven and make yourself man, that you may die upon a cross to save me from the punishment I so justly deserve?" Insolent to the highest degree would every one deem him who should have made such a prayer, not only to God, a Being of infinite greatness, but even to an earthly prince, to a friend or brother, though he had never in the smallest degree offended him. And yet what it could never have entered into the mind of any one to ask, the Sovereign of the whole universe has done of His own accord for the very rebel slave who was a traitor to Him!

(5.) To lay down our life for another, be he friend, equal, or superior, is the greatest height to which our love can go; "for greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friend," John, xv. 13; and hence, though we are the creatures of God, strictly bound to serve Him, and made only for His pleasure, yet we think we love Him in the highest degree if we offer ourselves to die for Him. How excessive, then, must be His love, seeing that He has done for us as much as we could do for our dearest friend, for the most loving father, for God Himself!

(6.) "Why did Christ," says St Paul, "when as yet we were weak, according to the time, die for the ungodly? For scarce for a just man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man some one would venture to die. But God commendeth His charity towards us; because when as yet we were sinners, according to the time, Christ died for us," Rom. v. 6; and died that His cruel and ignominious death might obtain for us remission of those very sins which we had committed against Himself,

and by which we had so outraged and insulted His Divine majesty.

(7.) What shall we say of the endearing solicitude, anxiety, and care, which our good Lord shows, lest by negligence and folly we should lose those invaluable benefits which His death procured for us? His infinite love is not satisfied with having done and suffered so much to obtain them; He is no less solicitous that we should accept and profit by them, than if His own happiness depended on our so doing. How many invitations does He give us throughout His Holy Scriptures to return to Him and accept the offers of His mercy! how many affecting lamentations at our obstinacy in refusing does He utter! how many reproaches! how many threats! how many promises, to induce us to forsake sin and return to His friendship! "Turn ye, turn ye," says He, "from your evil ways; and why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Ezek. xxxiii. 11. How many preachers of His Holy Word does He send to sinners! how many spiritual guides and directors, as His ambassadors and ministers, to treat with them on the great business of their reconciliation with Him, as if He had been the offender and they the offended! "He hath given us to the ministry of reconciliation," says St Paul; "we are therefore ambassadors for Christ, God as it were exhorting by us. For Christ we beseech you, be reconciled to God," 2 Cor. v. 18, 20. With what assiduity does He Himself stand at the door of our heart, entreating us, by His holy inspirations, to open the door and make up our peace with Him, promising the greatest favours if we do so! "Behold," says He, "I stand at the door and knock. If any man shall open to Me the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me. To Him that shall overcome, I will give to sit with Me on My throne; as I also have

overcome and am set down with My Father on His throne," Rev. iii. 20. "O how good and sweet is Thy Spirit, O Lord, in all things! therefore thou admonishest them that err, and speakest to them concerning the things wherein they offend; that, leaving their wickedness, they may believe in Thee, O Lord," Wis. xii. 1. Though they be obstinate in their wickedness, and deaf to His calls; though they reject, despise, and even ridicule them; yet He does not entirely abandon them, but as long as life remains He continues from time to time to invite, to entreat them, and even "waiteth that He may have mercy on them," Isa. xxx. 18. Forgetful in a manner of His own majesty, He follows them with an unspeakable humility and patience, waiting the proper seasons for their conversion. What amazing goodness! He is the master, we the slaves; He the offended, we the offenders; He the judge, we the criminals; He stands in no need of us, but we stand in need of Him; and yet He humbles Himself in such an extraordinary manner to make us slaves His friends, and we refuse! to give us pardon of our sins, and we reject His offers! to free us from the guilt of our crimes, and we choose rather to remain sullied with their defilements! But if at last the sinner yield to such endearing importunity, and turn his heart to the Lord his God by sincere repentance, who can conceive the joy, the exultation, the fondness with which His Divine goodness receives him? Witness His treatment of St Mary Magdalen, Zaccheus the publican, and many others, and the parables He uses of the lost sheep and prodigal son. St Paul, considering the inscrutable judgments of God and His wonderful providence, cries out with astonishment, "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! how incomprehensible are His

judgments, and how unsearchable His ways!" Rom. xi. 33. But how great reason have not we to exclaim, with equal astonishment,—O the depth of the goodness and love of God to man! How incomprehensible are the extreme humiliations to which it has reduced Him! how inconceivable the endearing abasements to which He descends for our sake!

(8.) Finally, Who is this God Who shows such amazing love for us? Oh, this, indeed, is a consideration the most wonderful of all! For He is a Being of infinite majesty, of infinite perfection, of infinite greatness; immense, incomprehensible, omnipotent; absolutely independent, and on whom every creature essentially depends; possessing in Himself the plenitude of happiness, which is so immense that nothing can possibly be added to it, and so entirely His own that the smallest iota can never be taken from it. He is the origin and source of all being, the King of kings and Lord of lords; so perfectly abounding in all good, that the most assiduous services of all mankind could not add to His essential happiness, nor all the blasphemies of hell detract from it; a Being, in short, of such excellence, that the whole creation, in comparison with Him, is nothing. And yet this great God condescends to love us with such amazing goodness! "Behold," says Moses, astonished at the thought, "heaven is the Lord thy God's, and the heaven of heaven, the earth and all things that are therein; and yet the Lord has been closely joined to thy fathers, and loved them," Deut. x. 14. O wonder of wonders indeed! that so great, so sublime a Being should deign to think of us miserable sinners; but how much greater wonder is it that He should love us in such an amazing manner! If a man like ourselves were out of affection to die for us, his death would be con-

sidered a most extraordinary and surprising instance of love; how much is it above all understanding that the King of heaven should do so! what return shall we make to Him for such inconceivable goodness?

The young Tobias, reflecting on the favours he had received from the angel Raphael, whom he believed to be Azarias, a man like himself, thought himself so highly indebted to him that he said, "Brother Azarias, if I should give myself to be thy servant, I should not make a worthy return for thy care," Tob. ix. 1. But afterwards, when Raphael discovered himself to the father and son, their astonishment rose to such a height in reflecting that so sublime a being should have shown them so much love and kindness, that "they were troubled, and being seized with fear they fell upon the ground with their face, . . . and there being prostrate for three hours, they blessed God," Tob. xii. 16, 22. What ought, then, to be the feelings of our hearts, who have received favours infinitely more valuable than Tobias received from the angel, and from a personage of a dignity infinitely superior to all the angels in heaven together? Oh, how powerful ought this reflection be to excite us to love and serve God, and to bless and praise His goodness to us. Let us then frequently cry out with the holy prophet, and in like sentiments of gratitude, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me praise His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all that He hath done for thee; Who forgiveth all thy iniquities; Who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; Who crowneth thee with mercy and compassion; Who satisfieth thy desire with good things," Ps. cii. 1. "Thou art my God, and I will praise Thee; Thou art my God, and I will exalt Thee. I will praise Thee, because Thou hast heard

me, and art become my salvation," Ps. cxvii. 28. "I will praise Thee, O Lord my God, with my whole heart; and I will glorify Thy name for ever. For Thy mercy is great towards me, and Thou hast delivered my soul out of the lower hell," Ps. lxxxv. 12. Wherefore, "I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being. Let my speech be acceptable to Him, but I will take delight in the Lord," Ps. ciii. 33; and I will show the sincerity of my heart by a constant observance of His holy commandments, for "with my whole heart I sought after Thee; O Lord, let me not stray from Thy commandments. Thy words have I hid in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee. I have been delighted in the ways of Thy testimonies, as in all riches. I will meditate on Thy commandments, and I will consider Thy ways. I will think of Thy justifications; I will not forget Thy words," Ps. cxviii. Oh happy those who enter into the spirit of these holy sentiments, and keep the commandments of their God! Happy for time! happy for eternity! They shall receive the hundredfold in this life, and in the world to come life everlasting.

CHAPTER IV.

OF OUR HAPPINESS IN THIS LIFE IF WE KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS.

Q. 1. IF true happiness, even in this life, can only be found in the service of God, and in keeping His commandments, whence comes it that we are naturally so averse to His service?

A. One of the things that chiefly discourage us from serving God and keeping His commandments is our mistaken idea that all the rewards of virtue are reserved for another world, whilst in this present life it is accompanied with constant difficulties and sufferings. Naturally attached to present comfort, we shrink from depriving ourselves of objects which we imagine essential to our happiness, and from submitting to sufferings which we think would render this life unhappy, even in the expectation of eternal bliss in the life to come. This conduct, however, is highly irrational; for though the rewards of virtue were reserved for the next life, this should not hinder us from pursuing it, when we consider, on the one hand, the imperfection, insufficiency, and short duration of all present enjoyments; and, on the other hand, the perfection, excellence, and eternity of that happiness which

God has prepared for us in His kingdom. But this is so far from being the case, that true happiness even in this life is found only in the service of God, and in the faithful observance of His holy commandments. It is true, indeed, this happiness does not appear at first sight. The philosophy of Christ is like Himself, "humble and lowly" in outward appearance, but within it is all Divine. In the eyes of the worldly-minded, nothing is more foolish or despicable: "it is a scandal to the Jews, and a folly to the Gentiles; but to them that are called, it is the power of God," 1 Cor. i. 23. And it is only those who apply themselves in earnest to the practice of virtue, that find by happy experience the admirable felicity which it brings to the soul; so that we may justly say to the worldly-minded what our Saviour says on a different occasion, "Oh that thou hadst but known, in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace!" Luke, xix. 14. It is principally by experience, therefore, that we can be convinced of this truth, as God Himself assures us by His prophet; for when His people proposed this very difficulty, and said, "He laboureth in vain that serveth God; and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinances, and that we have walked sorrowfully before the Lord of hosts? Wherefore now we call the proud people happy, for they that work wickedness are built up, and they have tempted God, and are preserved." To this God answers by declaring the special care He has of the just; and ends with these words, "You shall return" (*to wit, from your evil ways*), "and shall see the difference between the just and the wicked; and between him that serveth God, and him that serveth Him not," Mal. iii. 14, 18. Happy, therefore, are all who apply themselves in earnest to serve God; they will soon find by experience how much it is their interest to do so. But although it is

chiefly by experience that we are convinced of this, yet the sacred Scripture and reason concur in assuring us of the certainty of this important truth.

Q. 2. What are the direct proofs from Scripture of the happiness of a virtuous life?

A. We have the following testimonies among others: (1.) "Oh taste and see," says the royal prophet, "that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in Him," Ps. xxxiii. 8; and a little after it is added, "They that fear the Lord shall not want every good thing," ver. 10. Here the royal prophet, from his own experience, exhorts all others to try, in order to be convinced of the happiness of serving God. (2.) Solomon, in his admirable book of the Ecclesiastes, after having considered the ways of man, and declared from his own experience the vanity and folly of all the pleasures and enjoyments of this life, draws at last this admirable conclusion, "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is all man," Eccles. xii. 13. *This is all man*, says he; that is, not only all his duty, all his perfection, but also all his happiness, his only true and real felicity; for he draws this conclusion in opposition to the vanity of all earthly happiness, which he had been exposing in the former part of his discourse. (3.) Our blessed Saviour tenderly invites us to His service from the consideration of the happiness to be found in it, and the sweetness and easiness of it. "Come to me," says He, "all you that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you. Take up My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls. For My yoke is sweet, and My burden light," Mat. xi. 28. Consider each of these words: they are full of heavenly sweetness, and more than sufficient to convince us that our real happiness, even in this life,

is only to be found in the service of that Divine Master Who pronounces them. But His infinite goodness, not content with so solemn a declaration in general, in another place descends to particulars, and makes this sacred promise, confirmed with His usual asseveration: "Amen I say to you, there is no man who hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for My sake, and for the Gospel, who shall not receive a hundred times as much now in this time; . . . and in the world to come, life everlasting," Mark, x. 29. Here we see that the Son of God, Who is truth itself, expressly distinguishes between the rewards of virtue in this life and in the next, and passes His sacred word for the former as well as for the latter. Now, it is impossible that His promise should be made void; for "heaven and earth shall pass away, but His words shall not pass;" consequently those who in earnest serve God shall not only be rewarded with eternal bliss in the next life, but even here shall receive the hundredfold—that is, the only true and solid happiness of their souls; so that, although those who have no experience of the happiness of a virtuous life cannot comprehend this, in reality those who sincerely love God are alone truly happy.

Section I.

True Happiness not to be found in Worldly Enjoyments.

Q. 3. But how can this be, since we daily see the wicked, in possession of these goods, happy and joyful; while the good and virtuous, deprived of them, are suffering and unhappy?

A. To understand this we must observe that there are

two kinds of happiness and two kinds of suffering in this life; the one *external*, and the other *internal*. External happiness consists in the enjoyment of things which are agreeable to flesh and blood, to self-love and our natural inclinations, as bodily health, ease, the possession of worldly goods, riches, honours, and the esteem of others. This is the happiness offered by the world to its votaries. External suffering, on the other hand, consists in being deprived of these things, and afflicted with the contrary evils which give pain to self-love and our natural inclinations. Internal happiness consists in inward peace and contentment of soul, when the mind, satisfied in itself, is free from conflicting inclinations and desires; internal misery consists in discontent and disturbance of the mind, when the heart, dissatisfied in itself, is torn asunder by its passions. With regard to these two kinds of happiness and misery we must observe—

(1.) That they are by no means so connected as always to accompany one another; for a man may have great abundance of the means of external happiness, and yet not be happy in his own mind; as, on the contrary, he may be perfectly happy and contented though deprived of external happiness. The apostles were perfectly happy though destitute of all worldly goods; and Saul and Herod, who had abundance of all the good things of the world, were miserable, from the violent passions which raged within them. In like manner, a man may be in the lowest depths of destitution, and yet be far from feeling miserable in mind, as was the case of the martyrs and many others; and, on the contrary, a man may be miserable and unhappy, even in the midst of all external comforts. Of this we have daily examples before our eyes.

(2.) Though a man may have earthly enjoyment in abundance, yet he can never be truly happy without peace of mind; but, on the contrary, if he has this peace, though he be deprived of all worldly enjoyments, though he be in poverty and sickness, and even despised and calumniated, he is truly happy in himself. Hence the wise man says, "Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasures without content," Prov. xv. 16. The apostles were poor and despised by the world—they were cast into prison, loaded with chains, and scourged in a most ignominious manner—and yet were so happy and contented that they rejoiced under all their sufferings!

(3.) The most ample possession of worldly goods is of itself incapable of satisfying the human heart, or of affording that internal peace in which true happiness consists. This we see from daily experience, both in ourselves and others. We often imagine that if we had such and such things we would be happy and contented; but no sooner do we obtain them than we are disappointed, and find ourselves as far as ever from being satisfied. Some new desire intrudes itself upon us—some new object, in which we expect to find the wished-for contentment—but the moment we possess it, we find ourselves no nearer happiness than we were before. We may, indeed, find a certain satisfaction in acquiring the object of our desires, and this may continue for a time, while the phantom of novelty lasts; but let this be dissolved, and the soul begins to feel her former hunger—that mighty void again appears which no created thing can fill. "The eye is not filled with seeing," says the wise man, "neither is the ear filled with hearing," Eccles. i. 8. "A covetous man shall not be satisfied with money; and he that loveth riches shall reap no fruit

from them," Eccles. v. 9. Nay, the same Divine oracle assures us that it is as impossible to satisfy the desires of man with any earthly object, as to fill hell and destruction: "Hell and destruction are never filled; so the eyes of men are never satisfied," Prov. xxvii. 20. Solomon gives us the most convincing proof of this from his own experience. If ever any man could have been happy in the enjoyments of this world, he surely was the man. He had it entirely in his power to gratify every wish of his soul, and he set himself to do so, on purpose to see if it would make him happy. "I said in my heart, I will go and abound with delights, and enjoy good things. . . . I made me great works, I built me houses and planted vineyards, I made gardens and orchards, and set them with trees of all kinds, and I made me ponds of water, to water therewith the wood of the young trees. I got me men-servants and maid-servants, and had a great family; and herds of oxen, and great flocks of sheep, above all that were before me in Jerusalem: I heaped together for myself silver and gold, and the wealth of kings and provinces; I made me singing men and singing women, and the delights of the sons of men; cups and vessels to serve to pour out wine: and I surpassed in riches all that were before me in Jerusalem; my wisdom also remained with me. And whatsoever my eyes desired, I refused them not; and I withheld not my heart from enjoying every pleasure, and delighting itself in the things which I had prepared; and I esteemed this my portion, to make use of my own labour." After such an ample enjoyment of all earthly pleasure, would we not conclude that Solomon was happy indeed? Yet it was quite the reverse; he declares in what follows, not only that his heart was not satisfied, but that he found himself rather more miserable than before. "And

when I turned myself," says he, "to all the works which my hands had wrought, and to the labours wherein I had laboured in vain, I saw in all things vanity and vexation of mind, and that nothing was lasting under the sun," Eccles. ii. 1. Observe what he says; he not only found *vanity* in all these enjoyments—that is, an incapacity of satisfying his soul—but he found them accompanied with *vexation of mind!*

It must further be observed that this vexation of mind which accompanies even the possession of these enjoyments is infinitely increased, so as even to render the soul completely miserable in the very midst of them, if there be any one violent passion unsubdued or unsatisfied. Ahab, king of Israel, had all that abundance of earthly happiness which a great and powerful prince can be supposed to possess. In the midst of his enjoyments He cast his eye on a vineyard adjoining his palace, and sought to purchase it from Naboth the proprietor; but he, unwilling to part with the inheritance of his fathers, refused to sell it to the king. What was this poor man's vineyard to a king who had so many vineyards of his own—such possessions of all kinds in abundance? Yet, all he had besides was incapable of satisfying him while this vineyard was refused; the want of it alone made him miserable in the midst of his plenty; and thus the Scripture describes his situation on getting the refusal: "And Ahab came to his house angry and fretting, because of the word that Naboth had spoke to him, saying, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers; and casting himself on his bed he turned away his face to the wall, and would eat no bread," 3 Kings, xxi. 4. How convincing a proof is this of the insufficiency of all earthly goods to satisfy the soul of man, since the want of such a trifle

could make even a great king miserable! No courtier perhaps was ever more in favour with his prince than Haman was with King Ahasuerus. This great emperor "advanced Haman, and set his throne above all the princes that were with him. And all the king's servants at the gates of the palace bent their knee and worshipped Haman, for so the emperor had commanded them," Esth. iii. 1. In the midst of all this grandeur, Mordecai the Jew, from a principle of religion, refused to pay this homage of bending the knee before him as he passed. This trifling appearance of disrespect from a person whom Haman had every reason to despise, so stung his pride, that it alone imbittered his happiness, and rendered him, in the midst of every other thing his heart could desire, completely miserable. The Scripture thus describes his situation: "And Haman was exceedingly angry: but dissembling his anger and returning to his house, he called together to him his friends, and Zares his wife; and he declared to them the greatness of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and with how great glory the king had advanced him above all his princes and servants. . . . And whereas I have all these things," said he, "I think I have nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting before the king's gate," Esth. v. 9. What an instance is this of the vanity of all earthly things, when we see such a trifle imbittering all their sweets, and making one miserable in the midst of such abundance of them!

Another circumstance, which no less clearly shows the impossibility of finding true happiness in the enjoyments of the world, is this—that as in this life no one can be free from crosses, disappointments, and afflictions, no abundance of worldly enjoyment can possibly deliver the possessor from these sufferings, or support the mind in

peace and tranquillity under them; they cannot ease pain, relieve from sickness, support the soul under infamy and disgrace; much less can they give the smallest ease when the mind itself is oppressed by dejection, melancholy, or despair. "What will you do," says Isaiah to all such, "in the day of visitation, and of the calamity which cometh from afar? to whom will ye fly for help; and where will you leave your glory?" Isa. x. 3. Of this the unhappy king Antiochus is a convincing proof. After many victories and conquests, by which he increased his power and glory, he at last met with disappointment in attacking a rich city which he desired to plunder, and was obliged to depart in sadness. At this crisis intelligence was brought that the Jews had defeated another of his armies, and that they had again repaired the city and temple, which had been defaced and polluted. "And it came to pass, when the king heard these words, that he was struck with fear, and exceedingly moved; and he laid himself down on his bed, and fell sick for grief, because it had not fallen out to him as he imagined. And he remained there many days; for great grief came more and more upon him, and he made account that he should die. And he called for his friends and said to them, Sleep is gone from my eyes, and I am fallen away, and my heart is cast down for anxiety. And I said in my heart, Into what tribulation am I come, and into what floods of sorrow, wherein now I am, I that was pleasant and beloved in my power!" 1 Mac. vi. 8. See here how one disappointment undermined at once the happiness he had in all his other enjoyments; nor were they able to support him under the load of grief and dejection into which he was fallen, and of which he soon after died.

And this brings us to another consideration, which

shows still further how incapable all worldly enjoyments are to give us that contentment of heart in which alone true happiness consists; and that is, the instability of these enjoyments, and the certainty we have that in a short time we must be for ever torn from them by death. What solid peace or contentment can a man enjoy in the possession of any earthly pleasure, when he reflects that it may be taken from him—that he must be soon deprived of it—that he must for ever lose it, without the smallest hope of ever recovering it again? Nay, the more attachment he has to it while possessing it, the more his torment must be at the thought of losing it. And when the hour of death approaches, who can conceive the agony of his soul? If he has passed his days in disobedience to the law of his Creator, and in neglect of his salvation, as is the case with those who seek their happiness in worldly pleasures, what must be his misery at the hour of death, from the sight of a deceitful world that now forsakes him; from the stings of a guilty conscience which now upbraids him; from the expectation of a dreadful judgment that now awaits him; from the indignation of a just God whom he has provoked; from an endless eternity that opens to his view; and from the secret voice that tells him in his heart that this eternity will be to him an eternity of woe? What will his riches then avail? What consolation can his past pleasures then afford him? What support can all the honours of this world then yield to comfort his dejected soul under this load of sorrow? None. There can, then, be no true happiness in worldly enjoyments for any man capable of reflecting on the important truths here laid down, if he be not wilfully blind to his eternal interests.

But, (4.) Worldly pleasures, instead of affording peace of mind, are generally destructive of true happiness, and

if we set our hearts upon them they become the greatest source of misery. Who can conceive the misery, anxiety, and solicitude, to which a man is continually exposed, who sets his heart on riches, and seeks happiness in them? "All his days are full of sorrows and miseries," says the wise man: "even in the night, he doth not rest in mind; for . . . to the sinner God hath given vexation, and superfluous care, to heap up and to gather together," Eccles. ii. 23-26. Besides, "They that will become rich fall into temptation, and the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For covetousness is the root of all evils, which some desiring have erred from the faith, and have entangled themselves in many sorrows," 1 Tim. vi. 9. How can a man be happy in such a situation, and with such dispositions? Nay, the Holy Ghost assures us, not only that "the eye of the covetous man is insatiable in his portion of iniquity;" but immediately adds, "he will not be satisfied till he consume his own soul, drying it up," Ecclus. xiv. 9. And as for all our other irregular attachments to the enjoyments of this world, the same sacred truth assures us that they war against the soul, instead of giving her peace; and if yielded to, will make us a joy to our enemies. "Dearly beloved," says St Peter, "I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, to refrain yourselves from carnal desires, which war against the soul," 1 Pet. ii. 11. And St Paul thus describes what he had to suffer from this intestine war, excited in his soul by the desires of the flesh: "I know," says he, "that there dwelleth not in me, that is in my flesh, that which is good; for to will is present with me, but to accomplish that which is good I find not. For the good which I will, I do not; but the evil which I will not, that I do. . . . I find then a law, that when I

have a will to do good, evil is present with me. For I am delighted with the law of God, according to the inward man; but I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin that is in my members. Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Rom. vii. 18.

St James declares that all our miseries and dissensions arise from our unmortified lusts. "From whence are wars and contentions among you?" says he. "Come they not from this: your concupiscences which war in your members? You covet and have not: you kill and envy, and cannot obtain," James, iv. 1. Hence the wise man says, "Go not after thy lusts, but turn away from thy own will. If thou give to thy soul her desires, she will make thee a joy to thy enemies," Ecclus. xviii. 30. And of the truth of this we are convinced by experience; for what is the source from whence our troubles of mind commonly arise? Is it not the disappointment of our desires of external objects? We set our hearts on riches, sensual pleasures, the praise and esteem of others: we desire these things; we expect to find happiness in the possession of them; we labour, toil to acquire them; we are in continual agitation of mind in pursuit of them—now elevated with hope in the view of success—now as much dejected with fear and sorrow when we meet with disappointment; sometimes tormented with spleen against those who envy or oppose us—sometimes racked with despair when they gain the victory over us. If at last we lose the object of our wishes, we are oppressed with sorrow at the loss of an imaginary happiness we could never have attained; and if we gain our desire, we are vexed with disappointment at finding all our expectations of happiness frustrated:

yet, untaught by experience, we follow some new object with the same ardour—we pursue it amidst the same torments, and experience the same disappointment in the end. So insufficient are all external enjoyments to make us happy, and so destructive are they, when we set our hearts upon them, of that internal peace in which alone true happiness consists! The prophet Isaiah thus describes the folly and misery of those who seek their happiness in these things, and not in God: "Your lips," says he, "have spoken lies, and your tongue uttereth iniquity. . . . They trust in a mere nothing, and speak vanities; they have conceived labour, and brought forth iniquity. They have broken the eggs of asps, and have woven the webs of spiders; he that shall eat of their eggs shall die, and that which is brought out shall be hatched into a basilisk. Their webs shall not be for clothing; neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works are unprofitable works; . . . their thoughts are unprofitable thoughts: wasting and destruction are in their ways. They have not known the way of peace, and there is no judgment in their steps; their paths are become crooked to them; every one that treadeth in them knoweth no peace," Isa. lix. 3.

(5.) To set our hearts on external goods, riches, honour, and pleasure, and to seek our happiness in them, is not only destructive of internal peace, but, what is infinitely worse, it endangers our eternal happiness in the life to come. This our blessed Saviour declares in express terms in the Gospel, when He says to His disciples, "Amen I say to you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven; and again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven," Mat. xix. 23.

It is exceedingly difficult for a person to possess riches and abundance of the good things of this world, and not to contract a love for them; and when the heart once becomes attached to them, who can conceive the depth of iniquity into which it may fall? Hence the Scripture cautions us against the danger: "If riches abound, set not your heart upon them," Ps. lxi. 11. Now there are several grievous sins to which the very possession of riches naturally exposes the soul, and experience shows how few escape uninjured: the Word of God attests the same. "If thou be rich, thou shalt not be free from sin," Ecclus. xi. 10. Riches give the means of gratifying the passions; and, considering the depravity of our nature, it is difficult to resist our passions when we have it fully in our power to indulge them. Hence nothing is more common than to see the rich become proud and overbearing, self-conceited and vainglorious; and the Scripture assures us that "the house that is very rich shall be brought to nothing by pride," Ecclus. xxi. 5.

Forgetfulness of God and of the concerns of the soul is another pernicious effect of riches and worldly enjoyments, as fatal experience shows us. Moses was very sensible of this effect of worldly prosperity; and therefore, foreseeing the great favours which God was to bestow upon His people in the land of promise, he exhorts them to guard against this danger: "The Lord thy God," says he, . . . "will bring thee into a good land: . . . a land of wheat, and barley, and vineyards; . . . a land of oil and honey; where, without any want, thou shalt eat thy bread and enjoy abundance of all things; . . . that when thou hast eaten and art full, thou mayest bless the Lord thy God for the land which He hath given thee. Take heed, and beware lest at any time thou forget the

Lord thy God, and neglect His commandments. . . . Lest after thou hast eaten and art filled, hast built goodly houses, and dwelt in them, and shalt have herds of oxen and flocks of sheep, and plenty of gold and silver and of all things, thy heart be lifted up, and thou remember not the Lord thy God: . . . lest thou shouldst say in thy heart, My own might and the strength of my own hand hath achieved all these things for me. But remember the Lord thy God, that He hath given thee strength," Deut. viii. 7. The same warning he gives them on several different occasions, and particularly in the sixth chapter of this book of Deuteronomy, which shows how solicitous he was about this matter, and how much he apprehended this fatal effect of worldly prosperity; but foreseeing that in future ages they would forget his wholesome advice, and that the hearts of his people would be corrupted by prosperity, he thus describes the goodness of God to them, and foretells and complains of their ingratitude to Him. "He set him on high: that he might eat the fruits of the fields; that he might suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the hardest stone; butter of the herd, and milk of the sheep, with the fat of the lambs, and of the rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the marrow of wheat; and might drink the purest blood of the grape. The beloved grew fat, and kicked: he grew fat, and thick, and gross; he forsook God Who made him, and departed from God his Saviour. They provoked Him by strange gods, and stirred Him up to anger with their abominations," Deut. xxxii. 13. God Himself often complains of this by His prophets, and particularly by Osee, where He says,—"According to their pastures they were filled and made full; and they lifted up their heart and have

forgotten Me," Osee, xiii. 6. In all these passages we see that pride and forgetfulness of God are the natural, and too frequently the fatal, consequences of worldly prosperity, and therefore how dangerous it is to our eternal happiness.

Another pernicious consequence of worldly prosperity always accompanying pride and the forgetfulness of God, is hardness of heart, and an insensibility to the ordinary means which Divine Providence uses for our conversion. "I spoke to thee," says Almighty God, "in thy prosperity, and thou saidst, I will not hear; this hath been thy way from thy youth, because thou hast not heard My voice," Jer. xxii. 21. Job beautifully describes this sad effect of prosperity, and the miserable end to which it conducts souls, in these words: "Their houses are secure and peaceable, and the rod of God is not upon them. Their cattle have conceived, and failed not; their cow hath calved, and is not deprived of her fruit. Their little ones go out like a flock, and their children dance and play. They take the timbrel and the harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ." But where does all this end? He immediately adds, "They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to hell." And the reason of this fatal end of worldly prosperity he subjoins: "Who have said to God, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways. Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? and what doth it profit us if we pray to Him?" Job, xxi. 9. See here the depth of obduracy and insensibility into which worldly prosperity is capable of plunging the soul. God may indeed touch the heart by a sense of danger; but good dispositions thus excited are soon overpowered by worldly solicitudes and attachments, as Christ Himself assures us in the

parable of the sower, where He says,—"That which fell among thorns are they who have heard, and, going their way, are choked with the cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life, and yield no fruit," Luke, viii. 14. Indeed this is so generally the case, that a rich man who preserves his innocence, and keeps his heart upright before God without becoming a slave to his riches, is regarded as something wonderful, and in the Scriptures a particular blessing is pronounced upon him: "Blessed is the rich man that is found without blemish, and that hath not gone after gold, nor put his trust in money nor in treasures. Who is he, and we will praise him? for he hath done wonderful things in his life. Who hath been tried thereby, and been made perfect, he shall have glory everlasting. Who could have transgressed, and hath not transgressed; and could do evil things, and hath not done them. Therefore are his goods established in the Lord," Ecclus. xxxi. 8.

Besides these more general pernicious effects of worldly prosperity, there are certain sins to which it exposes souls, and by which it is seldom unaccompanied; such as idleness, opening a door to all sins; anger and impatience under the smallest trials and contradictions; intemperance and drunkenness, as in the rich glutton in the Gospel; and particularly lust and avarice. The first of these Almighty God thus declares by His prophet: "How can I be merciful to thee? Thy children have forsaken me, and swear by them that are not gods; I fed them to the full, and they committed adultery, and rioted in the harlot's house. They are become like amorous horses and stallions; every one neighed after his neighbour's wife. Shall not I visit for these things, saith the Lord?" Jer. v. 7. And indeed this fatal effect of riches and worldly

prosperity is so natural, considering the corruption of the heart of man, that even Solomon with all his wisdom was not proof against it; for thus the Scripture addresses him upon this head: "Thou didst gather gold as copper, and didst multiply silver as lead, and thou didst bow thyself to woman, and by thy body thou wast brought under subjection; thou hast stained thy glory and defiled thy seed, so as to bring wrath upon thy children," Ecclus. xlvii. 20.

But the most fatal effect of riches and worldly prosperity is the attachment they produce, and the insatiable desire they excite of possessing more and more. When the love of money takes possession of the heart of those who have riches, or when the covetous desire of becoming rich gains the ascendant in the mind of those who have them not, it is incredible to what excess of wickedness it urges them. It leads to hard-heartedness towards the poor, injustice, rapine, and oppression—to lying, perjury, and even to apostasy and murder itself. Hence the Scripture declares that "the love of money is the root of all evil, which some desiring have erred from the faith, and have entangled themselves in many sorrows," 1 Tim. vi. 10; and, "there is not a more wicked thing than to love money; for such a one setteth even his own soul to sale," Ecclus. x. 10: and no wonder; for the Holy Ghost assures us, by the mouth of St Paul, that "they that will become rich fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition," 1 Tim. vi. 9.

David, describing the fatal effects of worldly prosperity in those who seek their happiness in it, says: "They are not in the labour of men, neither shall they be scourged like other men: therefore pride hath held them fast; they are covered with their iniquity and their wickedness.

Their iniquity hath come forth as it were from fatness; they have passed into the affection of the heart. They have thought and spoken wickedness: they have spoken iniquity on high. They have set their mouth against heaven, and their tongue hath passed through the earth," Ps. lxxii. 5. Here the holy prophet declares that their worldly prosperity, their not being in the labour of other men, nor having the same scourges to undergo, the same trials and sufferings, is the very source and origin of all that impiety which he describes in their conduct: they have abundance of good things; they have nothing to suffer, "therefore pride hath held them fast." From this it is clear how difficult it is for a person in the midst of riches and worldly prosperity to work out his salvation; and that our blessed Saviour has the strongest reason for affirming that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

And indeed, though the Word of God had been silent upon this point, experience must convince us of it. How easy it is for a poor man to practise temperance and sobriety! How difficult for one abounding in riches not to run into intemperance and excess! An infirm and sickly person is not exposed to many temptations which beset one in the full vigour of health. Humility, the darling virtue of Jesus Christ, is easily practised amidst continual humiliations; but how difficult it is to acquire that virtue in the midst of honours, glory, and applause! In a word, adversity serves to discount the debt we owe to the Divine justice for sins already committed; prosperity gives us the means, exposes us to the temptation, and excites in us the desire, of committing new sins. Sufferings and afflictions compel us to call upon God and trust in Him; pleasures and amusements lead us to for-

get Him. The miseries of life convince us that this world is only a place of banishment, and turn our thoughts and affections towards heaven; worldly enjoyments cause us to forget a future life, and to fix our hearts on this. In suffering and affliction we have an inexhaustible source of merit in the sight of God, by the continual exercise of humility, patience, and conformity to His Divine will. Worldly happiness, on the contrary, excites to sin, by the facilities it affords and the encouragement it gives to our passions. What advantages, then, does not a state of adversity possess over one of prosperity in regard to working out our salvation, and securing our eternal happiness in the world to come?

All this our Divine Master saw. He knew how impossible it is for anything in this life fully to content the heart of man, and what a source of misery it is to place our affections on riches and sensual enjoyments, and to seek for happiness in them; He knew that the possession of all that this world can afford, instead of procuring internal peace, in which alone true happiness consists, is subversive of it, and commonly serves only to make us miserable; He saw the immense difficulty of working out our eternal salvation, and of securing that one thing necessary, in the midst of worldly prosperity. He lays it down, therefore, as an essential and fundamental condition of our being His true disciples, that we take off our affections from all inordinate love and attachment to any creature; that we fly from the inordinate desire of riches, honours, and sensual pleasures; that instead of indulging we mortify and deny our passions; in a word, that we never seek for happiness in the enjoyments of this world, but in Him alone, in His holy love, and in doing His will.

Section II.

We must not seek for Happiness in Worldly Things.

Q. 4. What is the doctrine of the Word of God concerning this so necessary condition of our being true Christians?

A. It is contained in the following particulars:—

(1.) Many dreadful woes are pronounced in Scripture against those who set their hearts on the things of this world, and seek their happiness in them. Thus—"Woe to you that are wealthy in Zion, and to you that have confidence in the mountain of Samaria: . . . you that are separated unto the evil day, and that approach to the throne of iniquity: you that sleep upon beds of ivory, and are wanton in your couches; and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the herd: you that sing to the sound of the psaltery: . . . you that drink wine in bowls, and anoint yourselves with the best ointments. . . . The Lord God hath sworn by His own soul, saith the Lord, the God of hosts, I detest the pride of Jacob, and I hate his houses, and I will deliver up the city with the inhabitants thereof. And if there remain ten men in one house ,they shall also die," Amos, vi. 1. "He that loveth gold," saith the wise man, "shall not be justified; and he that followeth after corruption shall be filled with it. Many have been brought to fall for gold, and the beauty thereof hath been their ruin. Gold is a stumbling-block to them that sacrifice to it. Woe to them that eagerly follow after it, and every fool shall perish by it," Ecclus. xxxi. 5. Our blessed Saviour in the Gospel is most precise on this subject: "Woe to you that are rich," says He, "for you have your consolation.

Woe to you that are filled; for you shall hunger. Woe to you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you when men shall bless you; for according to these things did their fathers to the false prophets," Luke, vi. 24. And St James tells us, in a very affecting manner, in what this woe consists. "Go to now, ye rich men," says he, "weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be for a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh like fire. You have stored to yourselves wrath against the last days," James, v. 1. Such are the woes pronounced against those who set their hearts on worldly enjoyments.

(2.) There are many and great blessings promised to those who seek not their happiness in the enjoyments of this life, but who cheerfully renounce their deceitful allurements. Thus we are told by the prophet Isaiah that the Messias should have, for a principal part of His office, to comfort and relieve those who live in affliction, deprived of the vain enjoyment of worldly happiness; and that He would be sent "to heal the contrite of heart; and to preach a release to the captives, and deliverance to them that are shut up; . . . to comfort all that mourn, . . . and to give them a crown for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and a garment of praise for the spirit of grief," Isa. lxi. 1. God Himself, speaking to those who seek their happiness in this life, and, as the prophet expresses it, "who set a table for fortune, and offer libations upon it," thus declares their misery, and the happiness which He has laid up for His faithful servants: "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, My servants shall eat, and you shall be hungry; behold, My servants shall drink, and you shall be thirsty;

behold, My servants shall rejoice, and you shall be confounded; behold, My servants shall praise for joyfulness of heart, and you shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for grief of spirit," Isa. lxv. 13.

In the Gospel, our blessed Saviour begins His Divine Sermon on the Mount with pronouncing a solemn blessing upon all such as take off their hearts from the objects of earthly happiness, and seek for their happiness only in God: "Blessed are the poor in spirit," says He, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all that is evil against you for My sake: Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven," Mat. v. 3.

(3.) We are expressly commanded not to seek for happiness in earthly enjoyments, nor to set our hearts upon them, but to consider ourselves only as pilgrims and strangers in this world, travelling towards our heavenly country, and to set our affections only upon that never-ending bliss which awaits us there. Thus our blessed Saviour gives this command to all His followers: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where rust and moth consume, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither rust nor moth consume, and where thieves do not break through, nor steal; for where thy treasure

is, there is thy heart also," Mat. vi. 19. And St Paul looks upon this holy disposition of soul as a sign of our being risen with Christ to a newness of life, and as a necessary consequence of the same. "If you be risen with Christ," says he, "seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are on the earth," Col. iii. 1. "For here we have no lasting city; but we seek one to come," Heb. xiii. 14. And therefore "we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know that if our earthly house of this dwelling be dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," 2 Cor. iv. ult. and v. 1. For which reason, "Dearly beloved," says St Peter, "I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims to refrain yourselves from carnal desires, which war against the soul," 1 Pet. ii. 11.

(4.) We are assured that it is impossible for us to set our hearts and affections upon the enjoyments of this world, and seek for happiness in them, and at the same time to be in friendship with our God. "No man can serve two masters," says Jesus Christ. "For either he will hate the one, and love the other; or he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon," Mat. vi. 24. For this reason St James calls all those adulterers who divide their heart between God and the world, and declares to them that by so doing they in effect renounce the friendship of God. "Adulterers," says he, "know you not that the friendship of this world is the enemy of God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend to this world, becomes an enemy of God," James, iv. 4. And therefore St John concludes

in this affectionate manner: "Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, which is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the concupiscence thereof; but he that doth the will of God abideth for ever," 1 John, ii. 15.

Here we see that *the concupiscence of the flesh*, which is the love of sensual pleasures—*the concupiscence of the eyes*, which is the love of riches—and *the pride of life*, which is the love of one's own supposed excellence, and of the praise and esteem of others—are the three things which, properly speaking, are meant by the *world* in Scripture language. The wisdom of the world consists in procuring these things; and we are assured that if we place our affections on them, and seek for happiness by indulging our natural inclinations towards them, the love of God is not in us, and consequently we can have no part with Him. And no wonder, considering the great opposition there is between this unhappy wisdom of the world, which seeks only after carnal and earthly enjoyments, and the Holy Spirit of God.

St Paul describes the opposition in strong terms. "They that are according to the flesh, mind the things that are of the flesh; but they that are according to the Spirit, mind the things that are of the Spirit. For the wisdom of the flesh is death, but the wisdom of the Spirit is life and peace. Because the wisdom of the flesh is an enemy to God; . . . and they who are in the flesh cannot please God," Rom. viii. 5. Again, he tells us that "the sensual man perceiveth not the things that are of the Spirit of God; for it is foolishness to him, and he cannot understand," 1 Cor. ii. 14. And this is what our Saviour

Himself declared to His apostles, when, promising to send them the Holy Ghost, He said, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you . . . the Spirit of truth, Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, nor knoweth Him," John, xiv. 17. Now, "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His," Rom. viii. 9.

But nothing more clearly shows us the extreme opposition which there is between this unhappy world, with all its enjoyments, and Jesus Christ, than the way He expresses Himself in the prayer He made to His Father the night before His passion; for in the midst of that fervent prayer for His followers, He adds this dreadful expression,—"I pray not for the world, but for them whom Thou hast given Me; because they are Thine," John, xvii. 9. Such, then, is the world with its happiness, with all its maxims and wisdom; an enemy to God, continually opposing Him, and on that account so much abhorred by Jesus Christ, that He refuses even to pray for it! It is with great reason, then, that St Paul thus warmly exhorts us to have no connection with it. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God, your reasonable service: and be not conformed to this world, but be ye reformed in the newness of your mind," Rom. xii. 1, 2. He even assures us that Jesus Christ "gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present wicked world," Gal. i. 4. And St James gives it as one of the essential parts of true religion, "to keep one's self unspotted from the world," James, i. 27.

(5.) In consequence of all this, we are not only forbidden to set our hearts upon the enjoyments of this world, or to seek our happiness in them, but we are expressly commanded, if we wish to belong to Jesus Christ, and to be His disciples, to eradicate from our

hearts, by self-denial and mortification, all natural inclination to these sensual enjoyments: to conceive a holy hatred against that corruption of our nature which so strongly inclines us to seek after them, and to wage a continual war against our depraved self-love, which, by its incredible attachment to all those objects that gratify its lust, is the greatest and most dangerous enemy of our souls. Thus our blessed Saviour lays down this self-denial as the first step in His service: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me," Luke, ix. 23. And to show how strictly He requires this from us, He adds, in another place,—"Whosoever does not carry his cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple; . . . and every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be My disciple," Luke, xiv. 27, 33.

The reason He so strictly requires this of His followers is, because while our self-love is alive in us, and all its worldly lusts, those enemies to God, continue to reign in our hearts, it is impossible for us to obey the holy law of God and save our souls; the first step, therefore, which we must take, is to subdue and destroy this self-love by mortification and self-denial. This our Saviour illustrates by the similitude of a grain of wheat, saying, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, itself remaineth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit:" and then He immediately adds,—"He that loveth his life shall lose it; but he that hateth his life in this world, keepeth it unto life eternal," John, xii. 24,—to show us that our self-love and all its corrupt inclinations must die by self-denial and mortification before we can bring forth the fruits of Christian perfection, and that we

must be willing even to lose our life itself, rather than continue slaves to our self-love, if we would keep it to life eternal.

St Paul, in like manner, after enjoining us to set our minds upon the joys of heaven, and not upon the perishable goods of this life, immediately adds the mortification of our passions as the necessary means to accomplish this: "Mortify therefore your members," says he, "which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, lust, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is the service of idols; for which things' sake the wrath of God cometh upon the children of unbelief," Col. iii. 5. He repeats the same thing in another place, by assuring us that the lusts of the flesh are the sources of all the sins which exclude us from heaven, and therefore concludes thus: "I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary one to another. . . . Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are, fornication, uncleanness, immodesty, &c.; of which I foretell you, as I have foretold to you, that they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God," Gal. v. 16. Hence he declares to us, that "if we live according to the flesh we shall die; but if by the Spirit we mortify the deeds of the flesh, we shall live," Rom. viii. 13; where we see that this mortification of our corrupt flesh is declared to be a necessary condition of salvation. And on this account he gives the fulfilling of this condition as a distinguishing sign of our belonging to Christ: "They that are Christ's have crucified their flesh, with its vices and concupiscences," Gal. v. 24. Nay, he assures us that it was one of the principal ends for which Christ came into this world, to teach us this necessary

virtue : "The grace of God our Saviour," says he, "hath appeared to all men, instructing us, that denying all ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, and justly, and godly in this world," Tit. ii. 11.

It is true, indeed, that the practice of this self-denial and mortification is difficult to flesh and blood; but we must remember that salvation is at stake; that no one is "crowned, except he strive lawfully," 2 Tim. ii. 5; that "we fight for an incorruptible crown," 1 Cor. ix. 25—"a never-fading crown of glory," 1 Pet. v. 4; for "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that cannot fade, reserved for us in heaven," 1 Pet. i. 4; for the possession of heaven itself: and our Saviour expressly declares "that the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence; and the violent carry it away," Mat. xi. 12. Consequently there is no medium; either we must do violence to our corrupt nature, denying ourselves, and mortifying our passions and lusts after the enjoyments of this world, as Christ so strictly requires of us, or there will be no heaven for us. And on this account it is that our blessed Saviour exhorts us to "enter in at the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat. How narrow is the gate, and straight is the way that leadeth to life, and few there are that find it!" Mat. vii. 13. Those who seek their happiness in the enjoyments of this world walk indeed on a broad road, where self-love is under no restraint, where their passions have full scope, where every liberty is taken to gratify the desires of flesh and blood; but instead of finding that happiness which they seek, they find nothing in all these things but vanity and vexation of spirit, and at last end in eternal misery and perdition. Whereas they who seek their happiness only in God, walk, it is true, in

a narrow way, where self-love is crucified, and violence done to corrupt inclinations; but they soon find by experience that this is a source of true peace and contentment to the soul here, and leads to eternal life and everlasting bliss hereafter. It is a narrow way, but one where difficulties are only in the beginning, and more in appearance than in reality; for when these are courageously overcome, and men begin to "taste how sweet the Lord is," they find their "way beautiful, and all their paths are peaceable," Prov. iii. 17. For as the Holy Ghost Himself declares, "I will lead thee by the paths of equity, which, when thou shalt have entered, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not find a stumbling-block," Prov. iv. 11.

Q. 5. Nothing can be more plain and decisive than those testimonies of eternal truth, to show the necessity of mortifying our attachment to the things of this world. But how can this be reconciled with the maxims and practice of the majority of Christians, which are the very reverse of this heavenly doctrine of the Son of God?

A. Rather, how can the maxims and practice of the majority of Christians be reconciled with these Divine truths? It is indeed sad to compare the conduct of many Christians with the rules of Christianity, and to see how much the spirit of the world with its maxims has intruded itself into their hearts, usurping supreme dominion there, notwithstanding God's denunciations of the world, and the lovers of the world. Their words and actions would naturally lead one to believe that the world is the only God whom they adore, whose favour they court, upon whose protection they depend, whose laws they revere, and whom alone they study to please. What the world will think, and what the world will say, seems to be the ultimate motive that decides

their deliberations; and though Almighty God has expressly declared that "if any man among you seem to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise; for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God," 1 Cor. iii. 18; yet how few Christians are there willing to be thought fools for Christ's sake, and who are not ready upon every occasion to transgress the most sacred duties of a Christian, lest they may be ridiculed by the world? To whatever lengths they go in worldly extravagance, in luxury, high living, dress, in dangerous and sinful amusements, the common excuse is, "We cannot be singular to be pointed at; there is no living in the world without complying with its ways; we only do as others do: many do much worse under such pretexts; they give way to all the inclinations of vanity, self-love, and sensuality." Such conduct as this, in those who pretend to be disciples of a crucified Saviour, cannot indeed be reconciled with the belief of His Gospel; but the truth is, they do not believe it, do not realise it, as delivered by its Divine author. Blinded by their passions and worldly attachments, they cannot understand it in the sense intended by Him. Immersed in sensual pleasures, slaves to the esteem and opinion of the world, grasping at riches as their only good, their understandings are so darkened that they cannot see, and their hearts so hardened that they will not believe, the plainest declarations of the Son of God: "The sensual man perceiveth not the things that are of the Spirit of God; for it is foolishness to him, and he cannot understand," 1 Cor. ii. 14. When the Jews refused to believe in Christ, He was not surprised, but said, "How can you believe, who receive glory from another, and the glory which is from God alone you do not seek?" John, v. 44. And even those among their rulers who did believe in Him dared

not confess Him, "for they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God," John, xii. 43. And when our Saviour had declared some very important doctrines to the people, "The Pharisees, who were covetous, heard all these things, and they derided Him," Luke, xvi. 14. Such is the unhappy case of these worldly-minded Christians; they cannot bear the light of this heavenly doctrine, so contrary to the dispositions of their hearts, and therefore they have recourse to a thousand devices and expedients to interpret it according to their own wishes. They annex limitations and exceptions to modify it; for, being determined not to regulate their sentiments and conduct by the Gospel, they flatter themselves that they can reconcile the Gospel to their worldly maxims and practice. Thus they not only strive to make friendship with the world themselves, but even to make friendship between Jesus Christ and the world, notwithstanding the infinite and irreconcilable opposition which He Himself has declared there is between them. But such nominal Christians would do well to remember, that to walk in the broad road with the multitude is to walk in the "road that leads to destruction;" that "many are called, but few are chosen;" and that those happy few are they who walk in "the narrow road that leads to life."

Section III.

True Happiness only to be found in God.

Q. 6. But if we must live in continual self-denial, and in the daily mortification of our inclinations, where is the happiness to be found in the service of God?

A. True happiness, as we have seen above, is only to

be found in solid peace of mind, which the world with all its enjoyments cannot give—it is the gift of God; and He has expressly promised to bestow it, as their portion, on His faithful servants who sincerely love Him and keep His holy commandments. "Peace I leave you," says our blessed Saviour to all such; "My peace I give you; not as the world giveth do I give you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid," John, xiv. 27. Here you see He distinguishes His Divine peace from the false peace which the world giveth, and shows it to be of a superior nature—a peace which calms trouble of mind, dispels fear, and is so far above any sensual enjoyment that St Paul assures us "it surpasses all understanding," Philip. iv. 7. And our blessed Saviour Himself declares, that the joy which He bestows on His servants is a joy which rejoices the heart, and of which no creature can deprive them: "I will see you again," says He, "and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you," John, xvi. 22. This peace of God, then, is the portion of the just—it is the inheritance of the servants of God even in this life; this is the hundredfold of their worldly enjoyments left for God, and which confers a happiness superior to all the possessions of the world. If, therefore, Jesus Christ requires all His followers to take off their affections from the things of this world—if He lays it down as the first step in His service to "deny ourselves, and take up our cross and follow Him,"—if He declares to His disciples that they shall be hated by the world—that they shall be persecuted—that in the world they shall have sorrow,—all this is the effect of His sincere love, and His earnest desire for our real happiness. He well knows that no worldly enjoyments can make us happy. He knows, on the contrary, that if we set our hearts on worldly objects, they will only make us

miserable. He knows that the sacred peace of mind in which alone true happiness consists, and which is His gift, cannot possibly have place in the soul if she be enslaved by the love of the world. He knows, in fine, that it is impossible to be His disciples, and faithfully obey His commandments, if we seek happiness in the enjoyments of the world; and therefore He warns us that we must renounce ourselves and all earthly things, and break off all our irregular attachments to the world, in order to be truly His disciples. But then, instead of the empty pleasures of the world, He promises that internal peace of mind which alone can make us truly happy even in this life, and which is a prelude to that eternal peace and celestial joy which shall be our happy portion for ever in the life to come.

Q. 7. But are not the goods of this life necessary in some degree for our subsistence whilst we are in this world?

A. Most undoubtedly: and our blessed Master is so far from imagining that His faithful servants should be deprived of corporal necessaries, that He even assures us He Himself will take care that nothing of this kind shall be wanting to them! He indeed forbids His followers to be solicitous, or to disturb their minds with anxiety, as to what they shall eat, or what they shall drink, or wherewithal they shall be clothed, because He knows that such solicitude would only destroy their internal happiness, and be an impediment to the good of their souls; but He exhorts us to rely on the providence of our heavenly Father, Who knows that we have need of such things, and then gives His sacred promise that if we seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, all these things shall be added to us," Mat. vi. 31, ult. Hence we see that Almighty God is engaged to provide

the necessaries of this life for His faithful servants, by blessing the lawful works of their hands, and giving them the fruits of their labours—not, indeed, in such abundance as He foresees would flatter their passions, and endanger their hearts being carried away after these things, so as to forget their God, but in such abundance as is most expedient for the good of their souls, and for securing their eternal salvation. And this is all that any Christian who wishes to save his soul should ever desire to have of earthly goods, as St Paul beautifully expresses in these words: "Godliness with contentment is great gain; for we brought nothing into this world, and certainly we can carry nothing out; but having food, and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content," 1 Tim. vi. 6. And even in the old law, the holy servants of God were so sensible of the danger of having more of the goods of this world than was necessary for their subsistence, that they earnestly prayed God to deliver them not only from too great abundance, but even from the very desire of it. Thus the wise man says to God: "Two things I have asked of Thee, deny them not to me before I die. Remove far from me vanity and lying words. Give me neither beggary nor riches; give me only the necessaries of life; lest perhaps being filled, I should be tempted to deny, and say, Who is the Lord? or being compelled by poverty I should steal, and forswear the name of my God," Prov. xxx. 7. And in another place: "O Lord, Father, and God of my life, give me not haughtiness of my eyes, and turn away from me all coveting: take from me the greediness of the belly; and let not the lusts of the flesh take hold of me, and give me not over to a shameless and foolish mind," Ecclus. xxiii. 4. So also David begs of God: "Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies, and not to

covetousness: turn away my eyes that they may not behold vanity," Ps. cxviii. 36.

Q. 8. Does the Scripture give us any particular description of the happiness of the just in this life?

A. Most beautiful are the descriptions which the Scriptures give us of their happiness, as to their having all sufficiency of the necessaries of this life, their being supported under all their sufferings, and the internal peace of mind which they enjoy; and most engaging are the promises made in these Divine writings. "Blessed is the man whom God correcteth. . . . In famine He shall deliver thee from death, and in battle from the hand of the sword. Thou shalt be hid from the scourges of the tongue, and thou shalt not fear calamity when it cometh. In destruction and famine thou shalt laugh, and shalt not be afraid of the beasts of the earth; . . . and thou shalt know that thy tabernacle is in peace, and visiting thy beauty thou shalt not sin," Job, v. 17. "If thou wilt put away from thee the iniquity that is in thy hand, and let not injustice remain in thy tabernacle, . . . thou shalt have confidence, hope being set before thee, and being buried thou shalt sleep secure: thou shalt take rest, and there shall be none to make thee afraid; and many shall entreat thy face," Job, xi. 14-18. "O taste and see that the Lord is sweet: blessed is the man that hopeth in Him. Fear ye the Lord, all ye His saints; for there is no want to them that fear Him. The rich have wanted, and have suffered hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not be deprived of any good. Come, children, hearken to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord. Who is the man that desireth life, who loveth to see good days? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Turn away from evil and do good; seek after peace and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are

upon the just, and His ears unto their prayers. But the countenance of the Lord is against them that do evil things, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. The just cried, and the Lord heard them, and delivered them out of all their troubles. . . . Many are the afflictions of the just; but out of them all will the Lord deliver them. The Lord keepeth all their bones; not one of them shall be broken," Ps. xxxiii. 9. "Trust in the Lord and do good, and dwell in the land, and thou shalt be fed with its riches. Delight in the Lord, and He will give thee the requests of thy heart. . . . The meek shall inherit the land, and shall delight in abundance of peace. . . . Better is a little to the just, than the great riches of the wicked. . . . They shall not be confounded in the evil time; and in the days of famine they shall be filled. . . . With the Lord shall the steps of a man be directed, and he shall like well his way. When he shall fall he shall not be bruised; for the Lord putteth His hand under him. I have been young, and now I am old, and I have not seen the just forsaken, nor his seed seeking bread. He showeth mercy, and lendeth all the day long, and his seed shall be in blessing," Ps. xxxvi. 3. "Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasures without content," Prov. xv. 16. "When the ways of man shall please the Lord, He will convert even his enemies to peace. Better is a little with justice, than great revenues with iniquity," Prov. xvi. 7. "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and is rich in prudence. The purchasing thereof is better than the merchandise of silver, and her fruit than the choicest and purest gold. She is more precious than all riches: and all things that are desired are not to be compared with her. Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and glory. Her ways are beautiful, and all her paths are

peaceable. She is a tree of life to them that shall lay hold on her; and he that shall retain her is blessed," Prov. iii. 13. Now this Divine wisdom is thus described in Scripture: "The word of God on high is the fountain of wisdom, and her ways are everlasting commandments. . . . God created her in the Holy Ghost. . . . And He poured her out upon all His works, and upon all flesh according to His gift, and hath given her to them that love Him. The fear of the Lord is honour, and glory, and gladness, and a crown of joy. The fear of the Lord shall delight the heart, and shall give joy and gladness, and length of days. With him that feareth the Lord, it shall go well in the latter end, and in the day of his death he shall be blessed. The love of God is honourable wisdom, . . . and the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. . . . The fear of the Lord is the religiousness of knowledge. Religiousness shall keep and justify the heart; it shall give joy and gladness. It shall go well with him that feareth the Lord, and in the days of his end he shall be blessed. To fear God is the fulness of wisdom, and fulness is from the fruits thereof. She shall fill all her house with her increase, and the storehouses with her treasures. The fear of the Lord is a crown of wisdom, filling up peace and the fruit of salvation," Ecclus. i. 5.

See here the endearing manner in which the Holy Scriptures speak on this subject; and as it is the Spirit of God Himself Who dictated these sacred promises, there can be no doubt of their being fully accomplished; and hence St Paul, fully sensible of the happiness of serving God, says, "Godliness is profitable to all things, *having promise of the life that now is*, and of that which is to come," 1 Tim. iv. 8. If, therefore, we frequently do not find the effects of these promises among us, the

fault is entirely on our part; we serve God imperfectly; we do not give ourselves up to Him with that unreserved confidence which would entitle us to such happiness: but if we consider the lives of the saints of God, there we shall see these sacred declarations of Holy Writ accomplished to their full extent. Call to mind the histories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—of Joseph, of Moses, of the whole people of Israel in the desert—of the prophets Elias and Eliseus—of David when persecuted by Saul—of Daniel and his companions,—with thousands of others in the Christian Church. In them we see how wonderfully their heavenly Father protects and defends those that fear Him, and provides for His servants what is necessary for their support in this life; and though, for their greater advantage, He does not give them a superfluity of temporal goods, yet He gives them more true contentment in the moderate portion which He bestows upon them, than the rich ones of the world can procure from their abundance; nay, their very prayers, fastings, tears, and labours, give them greater delight and satisfaction than all the joys and pleasures of the world could ever have conferred. This shows that the promise of Christ to His servants is abundantly fulfilled, seeing that they receive more than a hundredfold what they have left for His sake; for instead of the false and apparent goods they forsook, He gives them such as are true and real; instead of the uncertain, perishable riches which they abandon, He gives them such as are certain and permanent—"your joy," says He, "no man shall take from you;" He gives them spiritual consolations, peace, and tranquillity of mind, instead of worldly disappointments, anxiety, and trouble. And though the full rewards of virtue in this life are only given to the perfect followers of Christ, yet such is His

infinite goodness, that He bestows them in a certain degree even upon beginners; and the more they advance in perfection by conquering their passions and by the observance of His holy commandments, the more abundantly He bestows these favours upon them, and the more they feel, by happy experience, "how sweet the Lord is, and how happy all those are who trust in Him!"

Section IV.

How Happy the Just are, even in their Sufferings.

Q. 9. But how can this be reconciled with what both Scripture and experience teach us—that the good and virtuous are generally most afflicted in this world, whilst the wicked are prosperous and flourishing? This we daily see; and the Scripture declares that "many are the afflictions of the just," Ps. xxxiii. 20; that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," 2 Tim. iii. 12; and "that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God," Acts, xiv. 21.

A. The truth of what is here asserted is undoubted; but instead of being an objection to what the same Scriptures declare of the happiness of the just, there is nothing which manifests more the greatness of their happiness, as will evidently appear from the following considerations:—

1. Suffering and tribulations are inseparable from human nature in its present corrupted state; from the king to the beggar, none are exempted,—pains, diseases, loss of friends, poverty, disgrace, calumny, and other such miseries, are incident to every mortal; and no one

can always be free from some one or other of these sufferings. Thus the Scripture declares that "man born of a woman, living for a short time, is filled with many miseries," Job, xiv. 1. "Great labour is created for all men, and a heavy yoke is upon the children of Adam, from the day of their coming out of their mother's womb, until the day of their burial into that mother of all. Their thoughts and fears of the heart, their imagination of things to come, and the day of their end: from him that sitteth on a throne of glory, to him that is humbled in earth and ashes; from him that weareth the purple and beareth a crown, even to him that is covered with rough linen; wrath, envy, trouble, unquietness, and the fear of death, continual anger and strife. And in the time of rest upon his bed, the sleep of the night changeth his knowledge. A little and as nothing is his rest, and afterwards in sleep, as in the day of keeping watch: he is troubled in the vision of his heart, as if he had escaped in the day of battle," Ecclus. xl. 1. If, therefore, the servants of God have their portion of suffering, we need not be surprised: they are sons of Adam, born of woman, and subject to the common curse of human nature.

2. The Word of God assures us that these trials are more severe upon the wicked than on the just: "Such things happen to all flesh, from man even to beast, and upon sinners are sevenfold more. Moreover, death and bloodshed, strife and sword, oppressions, famine, and affliction, and scourges, all these things are created for the wicked," Ecclus. xl. 8. "Fire, hail, famine, and death, all these were created for vengeance; the teeth of beasts, and scorpions, and serpents, and the sword taking vengeance upon the ungodly unto destruction," Ecclus. xxxix. 35. From which it appears, that though we

sometimes see examples of good men who have to struggle against many sufferings, and also of wicked people who prosper, and are not scourged like other men, yet in general this is not the case; for even the external miseries of life are *sevenfold more upon sinners* than on the just.

3. What renders these common sufferings of life more severe on sinners than upon the true servants of God is this, that the former, setting their hearts upon earthly enjoyments, seek their happiness in them; consequently, when deprived of them, they are a prey to violent passions, grief, vexation, and despair, which render them miserable indeed. But the true servants of God, who study daily to withdraw their affections from worldly things, are mercifully supported under the common sufferings of life. Their piety does not divest them of natural feeling, nor prevent sufferings from making an impression on their senses; but this does not penetrate to the soul, nor rob them of tranquillity of mind. Momentary painful feelings they are enabled to suppress, without losing their wonted calm; and the more they advance in solid piety, the more easy this becomes. "Whatsoever shall befall the just man, it shall not make him sad; but the wicked shall be filled with mischief," Prov. xii. 21. So that, even in the midst of external sufferings, the just possess internal consolations to sustain them.

4. All the sufferings of life, of whatever kind they be, come originally from the hand of God, Who disposes of them according to the views of His Divine providence. When God sends them upon the wicked, He does so in His wrath, as punishments and just judgments; and as they from the malice of their hearts receive them with impatience and murmuring against providence, they pro-

voke Him to redouble His vengeance, while they are tormented by their sufferings, and become doubly miserable under them. But when He sends trials on the just, He sends them in quality of a father in His mercy, as necessary chastisements for their good and their correction; and therefore He always proportions them to their strength, and thus they become a source of profit, for "all things work together for good to them that love God," Rom. viii. 28. This we see verified in God's treatment of the Egyptians and His own people, of which the wise man says, "By what things their enemies were punished, . . . by the same things they in their need were benefited; . . . for when they were tried and chastised with mercy, they knew how the wicked were judged with wrath and tormented; for Thou (O Lord) didst admonish and try them as a father: but the others, as a severe king, Thou didst examine and condemn," Wis. xi. 5, &c.; and a little after he adds,—"With what circumspection hast Thou judged Thy own children, to whose parents Thou hast sworn and made covenants of good promises? Therefore whereas Thou chastisest us, Thou scourgest our enemies many ways," Wis. xii. 21. On this account the sufferings of the just not only lose their sting, but become a source of comfort to them. They consider them sent by their loving Father, not for their destruction, but for their edification, and therefore receive them as proofs of His love. They feel that by these trials He bestows the greatest benefits upon their souls; for they well know that "whom the Lord loveth He chastiseth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth," Heb. xii. 6; and therefore they say to themselves, with St Paul, "We have had fathers of our flesh who corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much more obey the Father of spirits and live? And they indeed for a few

days chastised us for *their own pleasure;* but He *for our profit*, that we might be partakers of His holiness. *For though* no chastisement for the present seemeth to bring with it joy, but sorrow; yet afterwards it will yield to them that are exercised by it the most peaceable fruit of justice," Heb. xii. 9. Hence the Scriptures pronounce those blessed whom God corrects, on account of the great advantages that flow from His correction: "Blessed is the man whom God correcteth: refuse not, therefore, the chastising of the Lord; for He woundeth and cureth; He striketh, and His hand shall heal," Job, v. 17. How light and easy does this consideration render the trials of the just, whilst sinners in their tribulations have no such consolation! They either do not think of God, and thus become a prey to distracting passions, or if any sense of religion awakens their conscience, it is only to torment them with bitter remorse, which tells them they deserve all that is come upon them. Happy would it be for them if this would excite them to repentance, and force them to turn to Him Who alone can help them!

5. Another thing which powerfully contributes to alleviate and sweeten the afflictions of the just is the special assistance which Almighty God gives them in their sufferings. This the Scripture displays to us in different points of view: (1.) That God is with them in their tribulations, to help and to deliver them. "He shall cry to Me, says Almighty God, and I will hear him: I am with him in his trouble; I will deliver him, and I will glorify him," Ps. xc. 15. "When he shall fall he shall not be bruised, for the Lord putteth His hand under him," Ps. xxxvi. 24. "The Lord is nigh to them that are of a contrite heart, and He will save the humble of spirit. Many are the afflictions of the just; but out of

them all will the Lord deliver them. The Lord keepeth all their bones; not one of them shall be broken," Ps. xxxiii. 19. "Behold the eyes of the Lord are on them that fear Him, and on them that hope in His mercy; to deliver their souls from death, and feed them in famine," Ps. xxxii. 18. "Thus saith the High and the Eminent that inhabiteth eternity, and His name is holy, Who dwelleth in the high and holy place, and with a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite," Isa. lvii. 15. (2.) That He is always ready to hear their prayers and grant their petitions: thus, "The eyes of the Lord are upon the just, and His ears unto their prayers. . . . The just cried, and the Lord heard them, and delivered them out of all their troubles," Ps. xxxiii. 16. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me," Ps. xlix. 15. "I sought the Lord, and He heard me; and He delivered me from all my troubles. Come ye to Him and be enlightened, and your faces shall not be confounded. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord shall encamp round about them that fear Him, and shall deliver them," Ps. xxxiii. 5-8. (3.) That He turns their affliction into joy and gladness. "We have passed through fire and water," says David to God, "and Thou hast brought us out into a refreshment," Ps. lxv. 12. "How great troubles hast Thou shown me, many and grievous! and turning Thou hast brought me to life, and hast brought me back again from the depths of the earth. Thou hast multiplied Thy magnificence, and turning to me Thou hast comforted me," Ps. lxx. 20. Nay, "According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, Thy comforts have given joy to my soul," Ps. xciii. 19.

"For Thou art not delighted in our being lost; because after a storm Thou makest a calm, and after tears and weeping Thou pourest in joyfulness. Be Thy name, O God of Israel, blessed for ever," Tob. iii. 22. Witness Job, Joseph, Daniel, the three children, Susannah, and others without number. What ground of comfort has not the just man in these truths to support him, though in the eyes of the world he labours under many tribulations? But as for the wicked in their tribulations, "The countenance of the Lord is against them that do evil things, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth," Ps. xxxiii. 17. To these God says, "Behold I will set My face upon you for evil and not for good," Jer. xliv. 11. "For evil-doers shall be cut off. . . . Yet a little while and the wicked shall not be: and thou shalt seek his place and shalt not find it. . . . Because the wicked shall perish; and the enemies of the Lord, presently after they shall be honoured and exalted, shall come to nothing and vanish like smoke," Ps. xxxvi. 9-20.

6. Lastly, what in a particular manner supports the just man in the day of tribulation, and not only alleviates the weight of his afflictions, but even makes them matter of joy and gladness to him, is his knowledge that they bring many benefits to the soul, and that they are sent by the fatherly hand of his good God in order to procure him these advantages.

Q. 10. What then are the ends which God has in sending afflictions and crosses upon His faithful servants in this life?

A. Some of the principal are these following:—

1. *To try them*—that is, to see whether or not they be sincere and faithful in His service—whether they serve Him for any present interest, or for His own sake, and

because it is their duty and eternal interest to do so. Thus, when God praised Job's virtue, Satan said, "Doth Job fear God in vain? Hast not Thou made a fence for him and his house, and all his substance round about; and blessed the works of his hands, and his possession hath increased on the earth? But stretch forth Thy hand a little and touch all that he hath; and see if he curseth Thee not to Thy face," Job, i. 9. Upon this permission was given to Satan to try Job, which was done by the most severe afflictions—under all which Job gave proof of the sincerity of his virtue in the most convincing manner; for "in all these things Job sinned not with his lips, nor spoke he any foolish thing against God," ver. 22. Instead of that he blessed and praised God for all his sufferings; nay, so far did he carry his fidelity, that when his friends were exulting over him he said,—"Although He (God) should kill me, I will trust in Him," Job, xiii. 15; and in another place he says,—"He has tried me as gold that passeth through the fire: my foot hath followed His steps, I have kept His way, and have not declined from it," Job, xxiii. 10. So also when the angel Raphael discovered himself to Tobias, whose severe trials had been no less remarkable than his virtuous works and piety, he said to him,—"Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptations should prove thee," Tob. xii. 13. And his noble behaviour under these temptations is most remarkable; for when he was deprived of his sight, the Scripture says: "Now this trial the Lord therefore permitted to happen to him, that an example might be given to posterity of his patience, as well as that of holy Job. For whereas he had always feared God from his infancy, and kept His commandments, he repined not against God because the evil of blindness had befallen him; but continued immovable

in the fear of God, giving thanks to God all the days of his life. For as the kings exulted over Job, so his relations and kinsmen mocked at his life, saying, Where is thy hope, for which thou gavest alms and buriedst the dead? But Tobias rebuked them, saying, Speak not so; for we are children of saints, and look for that life which God will give to them that never change their faith from Him," Tob. ii. 12.

The Scripture saith, "The furnace trieth the potter's vessels; and the trial of affliction, just men," Ecclus. xxvii. 6; for "as silver is tried in the fire, and gold in the furnace, so the Lord trieth the hearts," Prov. xvii. 3. "Gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation," Ecclus. ii. 5. "Abraham was tempted, and being proved by many tribulations, was made the friend of God. Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and all that have pleased God, passed through many tribulations, remaining faithful," Jud. viii. 22. This is a consolation to the servants of God in their severest trials. Even among men we love to have an opportunity of proving the sincerity of our regard in sufferings and dangers on their account. How much more, then, must a sincere love of God, and the desire of showing our fidelity to Him, sweeten every trial or affliction we have to undergo for His sake? Our earthly friends may not be sensible of what we suffer for them, may not put a just value on it, or be able to reward it; but our heavenly Father well knows everything we undergo for Him, its real value, and will reward it not only to the full, but superabundantly, infinitely above what we can conceive or imagine. "Afflicted in a few things," says His Holy Word, "in many they shall be well rewarded, because God hath tried them and found them worthy of Himself. As gold in the furnace He hath

proved them, and as a victim of a holocaust He hath received them, and in time there shall be respect had to them. The just shall shine, and shall run to and fro like sparks among the reeds; they shall judge nations and rule over people, and their Lord shall reign for ever," Wis. iii. 6. For "blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when *he hath been proved*, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love Him," James, i. 12.

2. *To give them an opportunity of discharging the debt of temporal punishment which they owe to the Divine justice before they leave this world, that so after their death they may be the sooner admitted into eternal rest.* Few of those who have come to the years of discretion have preserved their baptismal innocence; and who is there, even among the greatest saints, who has not in some things offended God? Alas! "in many things," says an apostle, "we all offend," James, iii. 2. Now our holy faith assures us that every sin deserves punishment, and will be punished by the Divine justice, either here or hereafter; for Christ Himself declares, "that for every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account at the day of judgment," Mat. xii. 36. Our Saviour exhorts us, while we are in this life, to satisfy by penitential works our adversary, the Divine justice, for this debt; lest, if it be not discharged when death comes, we be thrown into the dismal prison of purgatory, out of which, says He, "thou shalt not go till thou pay the last farthing," Mat. v. 26. But as our self-love is averse to all suffering, and unwilling to pay this debt by voluntary penitential works, God, of His infinite mercy, desirous to bring His faithful servants, as soon as possible after death, to the possession of His kingdom, sends them trials and afflictions, which, if received in a peniten-

tial spirit, will discharge, if not the whole, at least a great portion of that debt which stands against them. Thus the poor beggar Lazarus having by a life of suffering and affliction fully paid this debt, his blessed soul at his death was received by angels and carried to Abraham's bosom, a place of rest and peace, where he waited with the other saints for the redemption of Israel. This is a comfort and support to the faithful servants of God under their afflictions, and encourages them to bear them with patience, even with joy, well knowing that all they endure here is nothing to the torments of that prison out of which indeed they shall be saved at last, "yet so as by fire," 1 Cor. iii. 15—and not till they have "paid the utmost farthing."

3. *To purify their souls*, by breaking their attachment to themselves and creatures, and so perfecting them more and more in the pure and holy love of God. Our Lord has declared in His Holy Scripture that "His delight is to be with the children of men," Prov. viii. 31; and nothing hinders Him from communicating Himself to them in the most abundant manner but their unhappy attachment to themselves and to creatures, which closes their hearts against the Divine communications of the Spirit of God. Hence our blessed Saviour declares that we must deny ourselves, and renounce all that we possess, in order to be His true disciples and worthy of Him—that is, of being united to Him by holy love. Even in the faithful servants of God, there are many secret ties and attachments which escape their own notice, which even disguise themselves under the appearance of virtue and sanctity. In which cases God, Who sees these bonds as they are in themselves, and knows the hindrance they are to the advancement of those chosen souls in Christian perfection,

sends them the afflictions proper for breaking these attachments. He casts them into the furnace of tribulation, but preserves them therein ; so that, like the three children in the fiery furnace of Nabuchadonosor, they emerge from it scathless, the bonds of their earthly affections consumed, and their souls, like gold in the crucible, rendered more bright, pure, and holy than before. Hence St Paul assures us, that the corrections of our heavenly Father are "for our profit, that we may be made partakers of His holiness," Heb. xii. 10 ; and the wise man declares that "the mercy of God is lovely in the time of affliction, and as a cloud of rain in the time of drought," Ecclus. xxxv. 26.

A pious modern author writes on this subject as follows: By tribulation "the heart is cleansed, not only from sin, but also from all other imperfections. What would gold itself be were it not for the furnace and crucible, where it is refined and purified? without this trial it might remain almost undistinguished from the common mass of vulgar earth. The fire of tribulation is our crucible, and produces the like effects in our souls, which are naturally subject to innumerable defects, and of themselves incapable of rising to any sublime degree of perfection. Our passions and bad habits, that carry on an uninterrupted war within us, and self-love, in particular, which infects and poisons every action of our life, even the most holy, and, under a borrowed appearance of God's greater glory, works out its own ends and contrivances, can by no other means be kept in sub jection. One would think that supernatural lights and spiritual consolations might subdue that innate propensity we have to the pleasures of the world, and disengage our affections from its vanity and allurements ; and no doubt they may in some degree, but still they disengage

us not entirely from their dominion. These our internal enemies are rather strengthened and confirmed in their ascendancy over the soul by these extraordinary marks of the Divine favour, finding therein their own gain and advantage with more security and less remorse. A complete victory and absolute conquest over them requires still something farther. . . . The hard season of affliction and winter of tribulation must come to our assistance, and indeed are the only remedy for these evils. Without the aid of this sovereign antidote, our passions, though they may occasionally change their object, will still continue the same in effect, and in their native force and vigour. They divest themselves perhaps of what may appear gross and earthly, but, what is more to be dreaded, retain what is more abstract and spiritual; in other words, what is more dangerous and ruinous."—Pinam, 'Cross in its True Light.'

4. *To improve their souls in the most sublime virtues of meekness, humility, patience, and resignation to the will of God.* Nothing renders a soul more like to Jesus Christ, or more agreeable in the eyes of God, than these holy virtues; but it is impossible to acquire any degree of perfection in them without trials and afflictions; and as God Almighty has decreed that all those who are saved must be "made conformable to the image of His Son," Rom. viii. 29—so He sends upon them such tribulations as may enable them effectually to acquire these holy virtues by which they most resemhle Him: "Learn of me," says Jesus Christ *Himself*, "for I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls," Mat. xi. 29. Hence St James exhorts us to rejoice in our sufferings on His account. "My brethren," says he, "count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations: knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

And patience hath a perfect work; that you may be perfect and entire, failing in nothing," James, i. 2. So also St Paul speaks on this subject: "We glory in the hope of the glory of the sons of God: and not only so, but we glory also in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience trial; and trial hope; and hope confoundeth not," Rom. v. 2. St Peter also gives a similar advice, saying, "Dearly beloved, think not strange the burning heat that is to try you, as if some new thing happened to you: but if you partake of the sufferings of Christ, rejoice; that when His glory shall be revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy," 1 Pet. iv. 12.

5. *To increase their merits here, and their crown of glory hereafter.* The measure of our sufferings here is laid down in Holy Scripture as the measure of our glory hereafter, provided we suffer *with Christ*—that is, after the manner in which He suffered, with meekness and humility, patience and resignation to the will of our heavenly Father. "We are the sons of God," says St Paul; "and if sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ: yet so, if we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him," Rom. viii. 16. "A faithful saying; for if we be dead with Him, we shall live also with Him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him," 2 Tim. ii. 11. "For He that hath brought evils upon you, shall bring you everlasting joy again with your salvation." Bar. iv. 29. Now this is a source of incredible joy to the just in all their tribulations; for they well know "that the sufferings of this present time are not to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us," Rom. viii. 18; yea, "That our present tribulation, which is momentary and light, worketh in us *above measure exceedingly* an eternal weight of glory," 2

Cor. iv. 17. For "God has regenerated us . . . unto an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that cannot fade, reserved in heaven for you; . . . wherein you shall greatly rejoice, if now you must be for a little time made sorrowful in divers temptations: that the trial of your faith, much more precious than gold which is tried by the fire, may be found unto praise, and glory, and honour, at the appearing of Jesus Christ," 1 Pet. i. 4. And our Lord Himself exhorts us to rejoice in our tribulations on this account, and pronounces a blessing on them that suffer for His sake: "Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake: Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven," Mat. v. 11. For this reason the apostles, when imprisoned and scourged, "went away rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus," Acts, v. 41. St Paul also declares of Himself, "I am filled with comfort, I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation," 2 Cor. vii. 4.

6. *To manifest the glory of God Himself*, in either supporting His servants in the midst of their severe trials, or in wonderfully delivering them from them, to their great advantage even in this world. Witness the holy martyrs; the three children thrown into the fiery furnace; Daniel in the lion's den; Job; Tobias; Susannah; the man born blind; the raising of Lazarus from the dead; and the numbers of others in whom God manifested His glory and mighty power, so as to confound His enemies, encourage His friends, and increase their confidence in Him. What Christ said of the man born blind, and of Lazarus, is equally applicable to those other examples; for when "his disciples asked Him, Rabbi, who hath sinned, this man,

or his parents, that he should be born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him," John, ix. 2. And when he was told of Lazarus's sickness, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified by it," John, xi. 4. Now the faithful servants of God having a sincere and fervent love for Him, nothing gives them greater pleasure than that His glory should be promoted among men, and His Divine perfections manifested to the world; and this consideration is a great comfort and support to them under all their afflictions; exciting them to use their best endeavours to bear them in a truly Christian manner, for the honour and glory of His Divine majesty, perfectly resigned to His blessed will — to be delivered from them or sink under them, as shall seem to His Divine providence most conducive to that end.

Now these and many other such great truths have so powerful an effect upon the hearts of those who sincerely love God, that nothing is more common among His saints than to see them not only joyful and happy under the cross, but even longing for greater trials. They know that the cross is the only sure way to the crown; that no one shall be crowned but he who has lawfully fought; that this was the road in which Christ Himself walked to His eternal glory; nay, that it behoved Him to suffer, and so to enter into His glory; and that they can have no title to a share of His bliss unless they follow Him Who "suffered, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps;" for that the disciple cannot expect to be above his master, nor the servant above his lord. They know that "whom the

Lord loveth He chastiseth, and scourges every one whom He receiveth," and therefore are afraid that, "if they be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, they be as bastards and not as sons," Heb. xii. 6; and therefore they rejoice under the rod of correction and suffering.

Q. 11. What, then, is the result of these truths?

A. It is manifest that true and real happiness in this world is found only in the service of God, and in keeping His commandments. For, (1.) Those who serve God do not suffer more, as to the common trials of this life, than those who serve Him not: these sufferings are common to all; none are exempted from them. (2.) The miseries of life are sent upon the wicked by Almighty God in His anger as a punishment for their crimes; but they are inflicted on His servants in His mercy, as a fatherly correction for their real good. (3.) Wicked people setting their hearts upon the enjoyments of the world, and placing their happiness in them, are miserable when deprived of them. The servants of God, making it their daily endeavour to detach their affections from worldly objects, and seeking their happiness only in God, feel the loss of worldly objects less, and are soon reconciled to the want of them. (4.) The wicked have no resource under the evils that come upon them, but the vain help of human philosophy, which can never support the soul under severe trials. Good men, on the contrary, have a never-failing source of comfort in God, and in submission to His holy will, which preserves their peace of mind under the most severe afflictions. (5.) The wicked have no ground of hope under their sufferings to encourage them. The just derive so many benefits from their sufferings that they

experience consolation and even happiness in them. What a difference between the latter and the former! Hence the Word of God, which so beautifully describes the happiness of the good, paints also in striking colours the misery of the wicked. "The wicked man is proud all his days, and the number of the years of his tyranny is uncertain. The sound of dread is always in his ears; and when there is peace, he always suspecteth treason. He believeth not that he may return from darkness to light, looking round about for the sword on every side. When he moveth himself to seek bread, he knoweth that the day of darkness is ready at his hand. Tribulation shall terrify him, and distress shall surround him, as a king that is prepared for a battle. For he hath stretched out his hand against God, and hath strengthened himself against the Almighty," Job, xv. 20. "When they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape," 1 Thess. v. 3. "Shall not the light of the wicked be extinguished, and the flame of his fire not shine? The light shall be dark in his tabernacle, and the lamp that is over him shall be put out. The step of his strength shall be straitened, and his own counsel shall cast him down headlong. The soles of his feet shall be held in a snare, and thirst shall burn against him. A gin is hid for him in the earth, and his trap upon the path. Fears shall terrify him on every side, and shall entangle his feet," Job, xviii. 5. And no wonder; for "who ever resisted God and had peace?" Job, ix. 4. "The wicked are like the raging sea, which cannot rest, and the waves thereof cast up dirt and mire. There is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord God," Isa. lvii. 20. "For whereas wickedness is fearful, it

beareth witness of its condemnation; for a troubled conscience always forecasteth grievous things," Wis. xvii. 10: and therefore "the wicked man fleeth when no man pursueth; but the just, bold as a lion, shall be without dread," Prov. xxviii. 1.

Q. 12. Are there any other sources of comfort to the just in their tribulations, besides those above mentioned?

A. There are many others; such as, (1.) *Reading the Holy Scriptures*, which are written for our consolation; "for what things soever were written, were written for our learning, that through patience, and the comfort of the Scriptures, we might have hope," Rom. xv. 4. (2.) *Meditating on the passion of Christ:* according to that of St Paul,—"Let us run by patience to the fight that is proposed to us; looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, Who, having joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and now sitteth on the right hand of the throne of God. For think diligently upon Him That endured such opposition from sinners against Himself, that ye be not wearied, fainting in your minds," Heb. xii. 1. (3.) *Reading the lives of the saints* of God, by whose glorious example the soul is animated with fervour, and strengthened with courage to imitate them. (4.) *The testimony of a good conscience*, which is a continual feast, and supports the soul in all her afflictions, especially in such as she suffers for God's sake: "For this is thanksworthy, if for conscience' sake a man endures sorrows, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, committing sin, and being buffeted for it, you endure? But if doing well you suffer patiently, this is thanksworthy before God: for unto this you are called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that

you should follow His steps: Who did not sin, neither was guile found in His mouth," 1 Pet. ii. 19. Nay, "If you be reproached for the name of Christ, you shall be happy: for that which is of the honour, glory, and power of God, and that which is His Spirit, resteth upon you," 1 Pet. iv. 14. Hence St Paul makes a good conscience a subject of glory: "For our glory is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity of heart, and sincerity of God, and not in carnal wisdom, but in the grace of God, we have conversed in this world," 2 Cor. i. 12. A good conscience is a source of confidence in God that He will hear our prayers; for "if our heart do not reprehend us, we have confidence towards God; and whatever we shall ask we shall receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight," 1 John, iii. 21: and therefore St Paul exhorts us not to lose this ground of confidence: "Let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with clean water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He is faithful that hath promised," Heb. x. 22. (5.) *The consolation of the holy Sacraments*, where grace is bestowed upon the soul, according to her capacity of receiving it, to sweeten her troubles, and make them light and easy. (6.) The advice and consolation of spiritual guides, which are an immense assistance to calm the soul, and teach her so to bear the cross as to draw the intended benefit from it. (7.) *The internal consolations of the Holy Ghost*, which God never fails to bestow upon His faithful servants, amidst the trials and crosses, which they endure in conformity to His holy will. Of this David was sensible when he said, "In the day of my trouble I sought God,

with my hands lifted up to Him in the night, and I was not deceived. My soul refused to be comforted; I remembered God and was delighted," Ps. lxxvi. 3. St St Paul also says: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we also may be able to comfort them who are in any distress. . . . For as you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you be also of the consolation," 2 Cor. i. 3-7. This heavenly consolation God bestows with a liberal hand, the more abundantly the greater our sufferings are; for, "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so also by Christ doth our comfort abound," 2 Cor. i. 5. This David acknowledges from his own experience: "We are filled, O Lord, in the morning with Thy mercy: and we have rejoiced and are delighted all our days. We have rejoiced for the days in which Thou hast humbled us; for the years in which we have seen evils," Ps. lxxxix. 14. St Paul in like manner says, "I am filled with comfort; I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation," 2 Cor. vii. 4. And he assures us that it is a consolation which will last for ever. "Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God and our Father, hath loved us, and given us an everlasting consolation, and good hope in grace," 2 Thess. ii. 15. See, then, what happiness, what advantages the true servants of God enjoy even in this life, and with how much reason our blessed Saviour invites us to His service from this very consideration: "Come to Me, all you that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you. Take up My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls. For My yoke is sweet, and My burden light," Mat. xi. 28. How truly,

then, is it our interest to serve God faithfully, and to keep His holy commandments, seeing that our real happiness even in this life so essentially depends upon it; and much more when we reflect that there is no other possible way of attaining to eternal happiness in the life to come! This we shall now consider.

CHAPTER V.

ETERNAL SALVATION THE LAST END OF MAN.

Q. 1. WHAT are we to consider about eternal salvation?

A. We have already seen that obedience to the commands of God is a necessary condition of salvation; but as that would be a weak motive, if we were not thoroughly persuaded of the importance of salvation, we shall now consider eternal salvation itself—its excellence and importance; that we may see how much it is our only true interest to serve God here, since our eternal happiness, which is our last end, depends upon our so doing.

Q. 2. How is eternal happiness the last end of man?

A. We have seen that the end for which God created us was to glorify Him by loving and serving Him; this is the immediate end for which we have our being, for which we are placed in this world. All creatures around us are made for our use, and serve to show the infinite power, wisdom, and goodness of our great Creator, with His other Divine perfections; and the wonderful things He has done for us disclose still more fully His sublime excellence, and convince us how much He deserves to be loved, praised, and glorified. But His design in creating us does not stop here; He made us not for

this present life alone, but for eternity. When this transitory life ends, we begin another which will continue for ever; and such is His infinite goodness, that if we faithfully comply with the end of our being, by serving and glorifying Him here, He will hereafter reward us with eternal salvation, which is the possession of incomprehensible happiness, the enjoyment of God Himself for eternity. Therefore salvation is called our last end, as being the end which God had in view *with regard to us*, in creating us: "You have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end everlasting life," Rom. vi. 22.

Q. 3. Why do you say, *with regard to us?*

A. Because the Scripture says, "The Lord hath made all things for Himself," Prov. xvi. 4; and "every one that calleth upon My name," saith God, "I have created him for My glory," Isa. xlii. 7; which shows that the supreme and ultimate end which God had in creating us was *His own glory;* so that not only in this life are we bound to glorify God as the immediate end of our being, but this also will be the happy employment of the blessed for eternity. Now this glory of God in the next life consists principally in manifesting to the blessed the riches and treasures of His infinite goodness; so that the last end which God had in view in creating us was, in regard to Himself, His own eternal glory, and in regard to us, our eternal happiness. These two things are so connected, that our eternal happiness essentially consists in seeing God, and in loving, enjoying, and glorifying Him for ever!

Section I.

Our Happiness in seeing God, as our last End.

Q. 4. Why does our happiness consist in seeing God?

A. On account of His infinite beauty and numberless perfections. We find, from experience, that our nature is so framed by our Creator, as to receive particular pleasure and delight from beholding any object which is beautiful and perfect in its kind. Of material beauty, that of the human form is the most excellent, and when this is singularly remarkable it attracts and enchants the hearts even of the wise; witness the examples of Sampson, Solomon, Holophernes, and others. Now, if created bodily beauty, which is nothing compared to the spiritual beauty of the soul, and still less to the supernatural beauty of a being in glory, has such charms to please and delight, how much more must the infinite uncreated beauty of God beatify the souls of the blessed, filling them with inconceivable rapture and delight? Our souls and hearts are made for God: no creature is capable of satisfying their boundless capacity; nothing but an infinite good can fill them; nothing but the sight and possession of the beauty of God, the infinite good for which they were created, can give them entire contentment.

Q. 5. Can we form any just idea of what the beauty of God is in itself?

A. This is impossible; for how can a finite being form any just idea of what is infinite? How can the creature have any adequate idea of what essentially belongs to the Creator? Besides, we have no grounds to go upon, any more than a blind man has to form a just idea of

light and colour. The beauty of God is of a kind totally different from created beauty; and though all created beauty is from God, and therefore must be in Him, yet it is in Him after a manner so different and perfect that there is no possibility of forming any just idea of the beauty of God in itself, from what we see in creatures. Still there are several reasons which show us, in the most convincing manner, how great, how amazing, how infinitely delightful, must be the beauty of God.

1. The Scriptures declare that God is the first author of beauty; and from thence draw the conclusion, if men be delighted with the beauty of the creatures, "Let them know how much the Lord of them is more beautiful than they; for the first author of beauty made all those things," Wis. xiii. 3. "By the greatness of the beauty, and of the creature, the Creator of them may be seen, so as to be known thereby," ver. 5. This is a most just argument; for the Creator must have in Himself what he communicates to His creatures, and in a degree as much more perfect as He is infinitely more perfect and excellent than they. If, therefore, the numberless beauties dispersed among creatures in the universe—the splendour of the sun, the brightness of the moon, the sparkling of the stars, the colours of the rainbow, the immense variety of beauty which we see in flowers, in the productions of the earth, in birds, beasts, and all living creatures—were all collected in one, and to this were added all the beauty that ever existed in the human form; yet all this would bear no more proportion to the uncreated beauty of God than a small fire to the sun, or a drop of water to the ocean. Nay, what is still more; Almighty God not only is the author of all the beauty found in creatures which actually exist, but He can, if He please, create numbers of other worlds and of other creatures, as much

exceeding the beauty of this universe as it exceeds a grain of sand; and consequently He must contain in Himself all possible beauty without bounds or limitation, in presence of which the beauty of this world, and of thousands of worlds more perfect, would disappear as nothing—as the stars in the presence of the sun. Hence the Scripture says, "The moon shall blush and the sun shall be ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Sion, and shall be glorified in the sight of His ancients," Isa. xxiv. 23. What an amazing idea does this give of the immensity of that Divine beauty, and of the charms and delights which the sight and enjoyment of it must communicate to the souls of the blessed!

2. The second argument is taken from the properties of the Divine beauty. (1.) That it is altogether unchangeable, so that it is absolutely impossible it should ever fail, or even be in the smallest degree diminished. Oh, how frail and fading is all created beauty! Take that of the human form, the greatest and most engaging we know among creatures! how soon does a fit of sickness change the most comely countenance into an object of horror! how does the short space of a few years deprive it of all its charms! Its colour fades, its lustre disappears, its liveliness decays, and as old age approaches and disfigures it, it can scarcely be recognised for what it was! Death at last puts an end to its existence, and makes the most beautiful countenance even loathsome to behold! What, then, is the beauty of man? A falling star, a fleeting meteor, a scene of inconstancy, the sport of time, the delusion of the eyes, a shining frailty! Not so the uncreated beauty of the great Creator; His Divine beauty is essential, unchangeable, eternal. No accident can lessen, no length of time diminish it; and the happy soul, once in possession of it, shall never be deprived

of the inexpressible bliss she enjoys in contemplating it! (2.) The beauty of God is entire, perfect, pure, without the smallest mixture of deformity or imperfection. Consider the most beautiful being that ever appeared in the world; how far is its beauty from being complete even in its own kind? with how many defects is it accompanied, either in proportion of parts, in propriety of colour, or in elegance of form? and what innumerable other beauties are wanting to it? and after all it is only superficial, external, and under that outward appearance what does it contain? But the beauty of God is the assemblage of all possible beauty, in an infinite degree, without defect. It is as impossible to add anything to its perfection as it is to diminish it! (3.) It is superabundant—so amazingly so, that though it be communicated in different degrees to innumerable creatures, yet this causes no diminution of its own infinite perfection! Nay, it is so powerfully communicative, that it transforms into its own likeness those happy souls who are admitted to its presence; for, "We all beholding the glory of the Lord with open face," says St Paul, "are transformed into the same image," 2 Cor. iii. 18. And, "We know," cries the beloved disciple, "that when He shall appear, we shall be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is," 1 John, iii. 2. If, therefore, the imperfect, fading, corruptible beauty of the creature has such an effect upon our hearts, and gives us such pleasure in beholding it, conceive, if you can, the amazing effect, the infinite delight, of seeing and possessing this uncreated, immense, essential, eternal beauty of the Creator!

3. The third argument to show the greatness of the beauty of God is taken from its effects on those who behold it; and these are two, incomprehensible pleasure

and unbounded love. Pleasure and love are indeed the constant natural effects of beauty. It always gives a pleasure and delight to the heart of man. It naturally draws our will and affection towards it, and the more beautiful the object, the more powerfully does it produce these effects in our souls. Nothing, therefore, serves more to show us how immense must be the Divine beauty than to consider how it delights the souls of those who behold it, and how powerfully it draws to itself their love and affections.

Q. 6. How greatly does the clear vision of God delight the soul?

A. Here we must observe, 1. That the pleasure and delight which the soul enjoys from the beatific vision of God is beyond explanation, indeed beyond conception: for, "From the beginning of the world they have not heard, nor perceived with the ears; the eye hath not seen, O God, besides Thee, what things Thou hast prepared for them that wait for Thee," Isa. lxiv. 4; or, as St Paul expresses it, "The eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him," 1 Cor. ii. 9. And therefore the royal prophet cries out with astonishment, "O how great is the multitude of Thy sweetness, O Lord, which Thou hast hidden for those that fear Thee! which Thou hast wrought for them that hope in Thee!" Ps. xxx. 20; and St Paul also assures us that "the peace of God surpasseth all understanding," Philip. iv. 7. So that the supreme delight which flows from contemplating the infinite beauty of God not only exceeds all the pleasures of this world, but surpasses all that we can possibly conceive or imagine.

2. We are told by St Paul that "he was caught up to the third heavens, . . . that he was caught up into

paradise, and heard secret words, which it is not granted to man to utter," 2 Cor. xii. 2, 4: he does not say that he was admitted to the clear vision of God; he was still in his mortal state in which the Scripture tells us that "no man can see God and live;" and yet the beauties he saw and heard on that occasion were so astonishing and delightful that he was quite enraptured with them, and declares, repeating it a second time, that he did not know whether he was in the body or not—"Whether in the body," says he, "I know not, or out of the body I know not, God knoweth," ver. 2. Now if the glimpse he there had of the Divine beauty was so delightful as to deprive him of his very senses, what must it be to see God face to face, in all the effulgence of His glory? In like manner when our Saviour showed His three beloved disciples a glimpse of His body in glory, when He was transfigured before them, they were so transported and amazed that they knew not what they said. What must it be to see Him at the right hand of His Father? and if the human nature of Christ in glory be so delightful an object, and so enraptures the soul, what must be the infinite, uncreated beauty of the Deity?

3. Our blessed Saviour says to the good servant, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," Mat. xxv. 21. On which words a pious writer says as follows: "He first honours the faithful servant, commending him for his fidelity; then He enriches him, delivering many things into his hand, and so admits him into the joy and pleasure of his Lord; signifying, by His manner of expression, the greatness of His joy; for He does not say that this joy should enter into him, but that he should enter into joy. So great is this joy, that it wholly fills

and embraces the blessed souls that enter into heaven as into an immense ocean of pleasure and delight. The joys of the earth enter into the hearts of those who possess them, but fill them not, because the capacity of man's heart is greater than they can satisfy. But the joys of heaven receive the blessed into themselves, and fill and overflow them on all parts. Their joy is like an ocean of delights, into which the saints enter as a sponge into the sea, which fills its whole capacity, while the water surrounds and encompasses it all about. Hence joy shall be within and joy without, joy above and joy below, joy round about on every side, and all parts full of joy."—'Diff. between Temp. and Etern.,' B. iv. c. 4.

On this account the royal prophet compares this immensity of joy to a torrent which inebriates the soul, "O how hast Thou multiplied Thy mercy, O Lord! . . . They shall be inebriated with the plenty of Thy house, Thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of Thy pleasure, for in Thee is the fountain of life, and in Thy light shall we see light," Ps. xxxv. 8; and he declares again and again that this joy is so great that it perfectly fills and satiates the boundless capacity of the soul. "Thou hast made known to me the ways of life, Thou shalt fill me with joy with Thy countenance, at Thy right hand are delights even to the end," Ps. xv. 11. "I will appear before Thy sight in justice, I shall be satisfied when Thy glory shall appear," Ps. xvi. 15. "Blessed is he whom Thou hast chosen and taken to Thee; he shall dwell in Thy courts; we shall be filled with the good things of Thy house," Ps. lxiv. 5.

4. The joy which flows from the sight of God is no other than the joy of God Himself; "enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," says our Saviour. That joy which God is, and by which He is essentially and eternally

happy, is the joy which He communicates to His saints, by showing to them His infinite beauty. "I am thy reward," says He to Abraham, "exceeding great," Gen. xv. 1. "I am thy salvation," Ps. xxxiv. 3. God is a being infinitely great—infinite in all perfections; and the enjoyment of His infinite beauty, which shines forth in His Divine perfections, is such as to render Himself infinitely happy. Now this happiness, which God possesses in Himself, is what He communicates to His saints when they are admitted to His Divine presence: for He does not say simply, Enter into joy, but, to show the immensity of that joy, he says, "Enter into the joy of Thy Lord,"—into that joy which God Himself possesses, and which renders Him infinitely happy. Consequently the joy of the saints from the beatific vision of the Divine beauty must be infinite and unutterable, and all the pleasures of this world, in comparison of it, are nothing but bitterness, gall, and wormwood. So immense and incomprehensible is their joy, that thousands of years pass as a day, and each day gives them the joy of thousands of years. This St Peter desires us particularly to observe, as giving one of the most sublime ideas of the greatness of their bliss: "Be not ignorant, my beloved," says he, "that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day," 2 Pet. iii. 8. David also assures us that "a thousand years in the sight of God are but as yesterday, which is past and gone," Ps. lxxxix. 4; and that "Better is one day in His courts above thousands," Ps. lxxxiii. 11. What a wonderful idea does this give of the amazing delight which flows from the enjoyment of God!

5. What shows still more the greatness of this bliss, is, that though all the powers of the soul will be perfectly satisfied in the possession of it, the whole man be

satiated with exquisite delight; and though this delight will continue without a moment's interruption for eternity, yet the soul will never be weary in the enjoyment of it. But as she finds in the Divine beauty an inexhaustible treasure of perfections, of wonders, of truths, of graces, she is so overwhelmed with ineffable joy in beholding it, that for eternity she will never be able to turn her thoughts, even for a moment, from contemplating the lovely object which causes it. Her delight will continue as full, as entire, as intense, throughout eternity, as it was the first moment she entered into the possession of it. Oh how different is this from the miserable pleasures of this world, the most exquisite of which cannot be enjoyed, even for a short time, without creating disgust and loathing!

6. Lastly, this heavenly delight which flows from the vision of God is so powerful as utterly to exclude all possible evil, pain, and grief; nay, it is able to convert even hell itself into a paradise; for as the pain of loss, or being deprived of the enjoyment of God, is properly what makes hell to be hell, so should God be pleased to show Himself in His beauty to the devils and damned souls, that delightful sight would in an instant extinguish all their torments, and fill them with joy inexpressible. Oh how powerful must that joy be, which, cast into an abyss of miseries, converts them into consolations! Even in the small communication of God which a soul in her mortal state is capable of receiving, we see what wonderful effects it can produce. How many of the martyrs, in the midst of the most exquisite torments which the rage of hell and the malice of men could invent, were insensible of what they suffered in the body; nay, were even "filled with comfort," like St Paul, "and exceedingly abounded with joy in their tribulations," 2 Cor.

vii. 4, from that internal communication which God gave them of Himself? How much more, then, must all pain, grief, and evil, be for ever excluded from that happy place where God reveals Himself to His saints, face to face, and shows them in a clear vision of Himself the incomprehensible beauty of His Divine perfections?

The Scriptures give us a beautiful description of this singular effect of the Divine presence: "They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their forehead, and night shall be no more; and they shall not need the light of the lamp, nor the light of the sun, for the Lord God shall enlighten them, and they shall reign for ever and ever," Rev. xxii. 4. "They shall no more hunger nor thirst, neither shall the sun fall on them, nor any heat, for the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall lead them to the living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes," Rev. vii. 16. They shall be His people, and God Himself with them shall be their God, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away," Rev. xxi. 3. "The redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come to Sion with praise; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and mourning shall fly away," Isa. xxxv. 10. "O great, O bounteous God, who can conceive the riches of Thy glory, which Thou shalt communicate to Thy holy servants in Thy kingdom? When all clouds shall be dispelled—when the curtain shall be drawn—when we shall see Thee as Thou art, what infinite joy shall fill our happy souls! What torrents of pleasure shall we then enjoy, when Thou shalt display to us all Thy treasures!

—when all Thy beauties shall appear to us in their brightest colours—when our eye shall be struck with the splendour of all Thy Divine perfections! What heartful pleasure will it be to contemplate Thy immense, eternal, incomprehensible Being—the source and fountain of all being, and from which all creatures flow! What inexpressible joy to see in Thee all manner of truths, and all the wondrous ways of Thy Divine providence! What inconceivable delight to penetrate into the secrets of Thy heart, and there discover the endearing love and tender regard Thou hast had for us from all eternity! O how does the soul melt away in amazement at the thought of these joys! O how poor and worthless does all this world appear when compared with them!" Such, then, is the excellence of eternal salvation! such the great end for which we were created!

Q. 7. How does the beauty of God excite the love, and draw to Himself the affections, of those who behold Him?

A. As the sight of the infinite beauty of God gives inconceivable delight to those who are admitted to it, so it must excite in their hearts a love and affection towards Him proportionate to that excessive joy which they receive in beholding it; and consequently in a degree and manner altogether above anything we can conceive, from the experience of what we feel towards any created beauty: (1.) Because it deprives the will entirely of its liberty; the moment the soul beholds the beauty of the Divine presence, that instant she is forcibly drawn towards it with the most violent affection. Such are the charms she perceives, that it is no more in her power to restrain her affection: for as it is impossible for a thread of flax when cast into the fire not to catch the flame, so it is impossible for the heart of man, when

admitted to the presence of God, not to be immediately set on fire with the most ardent love and affection for Him. As it is impossible for a stone, falling from a height, not to be drawn down with violence towards the earth; so it is much more impossible for the soul of man, in sight of the Divine beauty of God, not to be drawn towards Him with the delightful but irresistible violence of holy love. Happy necessity, indeed, which inseparably joins us to the source of all happiness! Happy union of love which endless eternities shall never be able to disjoin! (2.) The Divine beauty not only draws the soul to itself with the irresistible charms of love, but also occupies the whole affections of the heart; so that the happy soul is not only necessitated to love God, but it is impossible for her to love anything else than God, or in relation to God; and therefore she can no more love either herself or any creature, but in God and for God, with perfect subordination to her love for Him. Whatever beauty or excellence she perceives in any creature, she sees the same, but infinitely more perfect, in God. Whatever pleasure she can receive from them, she receives an infinitely greater in Him. Her whole delight, then, is in God—her whole affections are fixed in Him—her joy is to please Him—her most sublime happiness is to do His will—her delightful employment to contemplate His infinite beauty, His Divine perfections, to praise, magnify, and adore Him for ever, singing with ineffable consolation, "Benediction, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, honour, and power, and strength to our God for ever and ever. Amen."—Rev. vii. 12.

Section II.

The Excellence of our last End.

Q. 8. How great is the excellence or value of our last end?

A. What we have already seen serves to give us the most sublime idea of the excellence of this glorious end for which we are created. For what can we conceive more exalted, more honourable, more glorious, than to be united with God by holy love, to be ever in His presence, enraptured with infinite delight in possessing Him, honoured as His intimate friends and dear children, transformed into the image of His glory, and unchangeably fixed in the possession of that supreme good for ever? However, as there are several other considerations which serve to show still more and more the invaluable excellence of our salvation, we shall here briefly state them :—

1. The exalted light in which the Scripture everywhere represents it to us. Thus (1.) our Saviour says, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field, which when a man hath found he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like to a merchant seeking good pearls; who when he had found one pearl of great price, went his way, and sold all that he had, and bought it," Mat. xii. 44. In both these similitudes Jesus Christ Himself shows us of what infinite value our salvation is, and how richly it deserves to be purchased, even though we should part with everything else to procure it; for indeed it is above all value—nothing in this world can be comparable to it. (2.) It

is everywhere proposed to us in the Scriptures as a kingdom; but it is a kingdom infinitely preferable to the whole world, in its riches, its exalted glory, and in the ineffable pleasure it affords to those who obtain it. The royal prophet thus describes the excellence of this heavenly kingdom: "In Thy strength, O Lord, the king shall joy, and in Thy salvation he shall rejoice exceedingly; Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden from him the will of his lips; for Thou hast prevented him with blessings of sweetness; Thou hast set on his head a crown of precious stones; he asked life of Thee, and Thou hast given him length of days for ever and ever. His glory is great in Thy salvation; glory and great beauty shalt Thou lay upon him; for Thou shalt give him to be a blessing for ever and ever: Thou shalt make him joyful in gladness with Thy countenance," Ps. xx. 1. (3.) "Blessed are those servants," says Jesus Christ, "whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching; Amen, I say to you, that He will gird Himself, and make them sit down to meat, and passing will minister to them," Luke, xii. 37. What an inconceivable idea does this expression of the Son of God give of the dignity and honour which He will bestow on His faithful servants in His kingdom! That He Himself will become, in a manner, their servant; He will make them sit down to feast at the delicious banquet of his table, and He Himself will serve them! (4.) "He that shall overcome and keep My words unto the end, I will give him power over the nations, ... as I also have received of My Father; and I will give him the morning star," Rev. ii. 26. "He that shall overcome shall be clothed in white garments, . . . and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels. . . . He that shall overcome, I will

make him a pillar in the temple of My God; and he shall go out no more, and I will write upon him the name of My God, . . . and My new name. . . . To him that shall overcome, I will give to sit with Me on My throne, as I also have overcome, and am set down with My Father in His throne," Rev. iii. 5, 12, 21. Consider each of these expressions, and see the exalted idea they give of the dignity and excellence of eternal salvation.

2. This is further shown from the extraordinary means which God has used, and daily uses, for procuring the salvation of His elect. For who could ever imagine that He would so wonderfully exert His Almighty power, and employ the sovereign dominion He has over the whole creation to procure it, if it were not an object of the highest excellence in His eyes, and worthy of all that He does to obtain it? On this, then, we must observe:—(1.) That the creation of this world, and all the wondrous ways of Divine Providence preserving and governing it, are intended for the salvation of souls, as the great end the Creator has in view in its existence. The inferior creatures are intended for the use and benefit of man, to display to him the wisdom, power, goodness, and other perfections of the Creator, and thus serve as motives, means, or instruments, by which he may be excited and enabled to know, love, and glorify his God, and by so doing save his own soul. (2.) The inferior creatures must end with time, and at the last day, when "the heavens shall pass away with great violence, and the elements shall be melted with heat, and the earth and the works that are in it shall be burnt up," 2 Peter, iii. 10. When all these creatures which have their being on the earth for the use of man shall be no more, because man shall be no more upon the earth to use them, man himself will still exist in another

life, which shall last for eternity. And as the duration of the world will continue only till the number of the elect be fulfilled, the salvation of the elect is the great end which God has in view in the creation, preservation, and government of the world. (3.) Though the general conduct of Providence in what passes here below is, in a great measure, concealed from our eyes under the veil of second causes, yet it is certain that nothing happens which has not a relation to the salvation of the elect. The economy of nature is of an inferior order to that of grace, and is established to be subordinate to it, and it is just that all temporal things should be subservient to those that are eternal. This visible world is made only for one that is invisible, and the sovereign Lord of all disposes and regulates all that passes in the one, only to serve as a foundation on which to establish the other. The continual chain of events in life, the innumerable incidents in the world, are all regulated by the hidden springs of the Divine Providence, according to the sacred relation they bear to the salvation of souls—"for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus unto heavenly glory," 2 Tim. ii. 10. "For all things are for your sakes, that the grace abounding through many may abound in thanksgiving to the glory of God," 2 Cor. iv. 15. Our Saviour Himself assures us that in the latter days, for their sake, He will shorten the duration of time, and put a more speedy end to the existence of the world: "Unless the Lord had shortened the days, no flesh should be saved; but for the sake of the elect which He hath chosen, He hath shortened the days," Mark, xiii. 20.

What wonderful things did God do in all parts of the creation—in the heavens, in the earth, in the seas and rivers—in order to bring His chosen people out of Egypt,

and place them in the earthly Canaan, the land of promise. All these things, as St Paul assures us, 1 Cor. x. 6, were done in figure of us, to show the economy of the Divine Providence in what He does to bring His elect from the Egypt of sin, and from the bondage of Satan, and place them in the heavenly Canaan, the true land of promise. But how exalted an idea does all this give us of the great value and excellence of the salvation of souls, when we see the Almighty using such wonderful means to procure it, and making all creation subservient to it! Nothing is of any value in the sight of God but salvation; everything else in comparison of it is with Him an object of contempt. The rise or fall of empires, the establishment or destruction of kingdoms, the humiliation of the powers of the earth, all temporal events whatsoever, are of no real value before God—are a matter of mere indifference to Him but in as far as they are connected with or have a relation to the salvation of souls. How great, then, must be the value of souls in His sight! How precious before Him their eternal salvation! (4.) But it is a small matter in the judgment of God to make the material creation subservient to the salvation of souls; it is in itself so insignificant that it would have little or no value but from its relation to that great end. He goes further: He employs even those sublime spirits, His holy angels, who always see His face in glory, and are the most perfect of His creatures, in order to procure our salvation. "They are all ministering spirits," as St Paul assures us, "sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation," Heb. i. 14. To *minister*—that is, to serve them, to have the charge of them, to encamp round about them and defend them, and to assist them in securing that great and important end of their being—their eternal salvation. Can

we imagine that God would employ these sublime beings on such a service, that they would undertake it with such cheerfulness, or execute it with such fidelity and care, were it not in His and their esteem an object worthy of so much attention?

(5.) But what are those means used by God to procure the salvation of souls in comparison with what Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has done and suffered for that purpose? When we reflect that God is a being of infinite perfection, and wholly independent, that He possesses in Himself alone such a plenitude of essential happiness, such infinite bliss, that it can receive no increase even from the salvation of all the posterity of Adam, nor be diminished by the eternal perdition of the whole; that if He please He can create innumerable worlds of other creatures to serve and obey Him in whatever He chooses; in a word, that He has not the smallest need of us, and that when we have done all, we must acknowledge ourselves unprofitable servants;—when we consider this, and then behold this great Being, when we were lost in sin, humbling Himself, taking upon Him the form of man, in the likeness of sinful flesh, Rom. viii., and after suffering the most cruel and ignominious torments, at last dying in a disgraceful manner upon a cross to save our souls, and bring them to eternal salvation, we are confounded—we are lost in amazement! Think what we please, we shall never be able to fathom this incomprehensible mystery, but will be forced to conclude that the salvation of souls must be a valuable object indeed, since the eternal wisdom of the Father used such extraordinary means to procure it.

3. Another thing which shows the immense value and excellence of salvation is, that it is eternal; in which respect the greatest and most esteemed things of this

world disappear in its presence as smoke before the wind. And, indeed, what weight or value can any human affair have in the heart of a thinking man when he reflects that it must all soon end? How vain do all the toils and labours of men appear, even in those affairs which seem to them of the highest importance, when we reflect how soon their greatest achievements and most renowned performances are brought to nothing! What labours, what toils, what dangers, what waste of blood and treasure, did it not cost an Alexander, a Cæsar, and other worldly heroes, to conquer kingdoms and establish empires? and yet how short was the time that they enjoyed the fruit of their labours! How soon after their death were the conquests lost, and their very countries themselves sunk in obscurity! Nothing appears more reasonable, or of greater consequence in the eyes of worldly people, than to spend their time and labour in improving their fortunes, raising their families, and laying up treasure for their children. But how often are they disappointed in their views, notwithstanding all their endeavours? and if they do succeed, how long does it last? Scarce a generation passes when their posterity, either by their own folly or unforeseen accidents, are reduced to poverty, misery, and obscurity.

How beautifully does Solomon describe this vanity of all temporal things throughout the whole book of Ecclesiastes! "Vanity of vanities," says he, "and all is vanity. What hath a man more of all his labour that he taketh under the sun? . . . the eye is not filled with seeing, neither is the ear filled with hearing. . . . There is no remembrance of former things; nor indeed of those things which hereafter are to come, shall there be any remembrance with them that shall be in the latter end. . . . I have seen all things that are under the sun, and behold

all is vanity and vexation of spirit," ch. i. "I said in my heart, I will go and abound with delights, and enjoy good things. . . . And when I turned myself to all the works which my hand had wrought, and to the labours wherein I had laboured in vain, I saw in all things vanity and vexation of spirit, and that nothing was lasting under the sun. . . . Again I hated all application wherewith I had earnestly laboured under the sun, being like to have an heir after me, whom I know not whether he shall be a wise man or a fool, and he shall have rule over all my labours with which I have laboured and been solicitous: and is there anything so vain? . . . For what profit shall a man have of all his labour and vexation of spirit with which he hath been tormented under the sun? All his days are full of sorrows and miseries, even the night he doth not rest in mind: and is not this vanity? . . . To the sinner God hath given vexation, and superfluous care to heap up and to gather together, and to give it to him that hath pleased God; but this also is vanity, and a fruitless solicitude of the mind," ii. 1. 26. "The death of man and the death of beasts is one, and the condition of them both is equal; as man dieth, so they also die: all things breathe alike, and man hath nothing more than beast (*as to the life of the body*); all things are subject to vanity. And all things go to one place: of earth they were made, and unto earth they return together," iii. 19, 20. "Again I considered all the labours of men, and I remarked that their industries are exposed to the envy of their neighbours; so in this also there is vanity and fruitless care. . . . There is but one, and he hath not a second, no child, no brother, and yet he ceaseth not to labour, neither are his eyes satisfied with riches, neither doth he reflect, saying, For whom do I labour and defraud my soul of good things? in this also is vanity, and a grievous vexation,"

iv. 4-8. "Where there are great riches, there are also many to eat them. And what doth it profit the owner, but that he seeth the riches with his eyes? . . . There is also another grievous evil which I have seen under the sun; riches kept to the hurt of the owner: for they are lost with very great affliction: he hath begotten a son who shall be in the extremity of want. As he came forth naked from his mother's womb, so shall he return, and shall take nothing away with him of his labour. A most deplorable evil! as he came, so shall he return. What then doth it profit him that he hath laboured for the wind? All the days of his life he eateth in darkness, and in many cares, and in misery and sorrow," v. 10-16. "There is no man that liveth always, or that hopeth for this. . . . For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know nothing more" (to wit, of the transactions of this world), "neither have they a reward any more; for the memory of them is forgotten. Their love also, and their hatred, and their envy are all perished; neither have they any part in this world, and in the work that is done under the sun. . . . Man knoweth not his own end; but as fishes are taken with the hook, and as birds are caught with the snare, so men are taken in the evil time, when it shall suddenly come upon them," ix. 4-12. "If a man live many years, and hath rejoiced in them all, he must remember the darksome time, and the many days; which, when they shall come, the things past shall be accused of vanity," xi. 8. See here, in the words of God Himself pronounced by the wisest of men, a striking picture of the vanity and emptiness of all temporal things, and how little they deserve to be valued or esteemed! and therefore he justly concludes, as the result of all that he had said: "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the time of affliction come, and the years draw nigh, of

which thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them: . . . because man shall go into the house of eternity; . . . the dust shall return into its earth, and the spirit to the God who gave it. . . . Let us hear together the conclusion of the discourse: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is all man; and all things that are done, God will bring into judgment for every secret thing, whether it be good or evil," xii. 1-5, 7, 13, 14. In which just conclusion he shows us that eternity is the only thing that deserves our esteem and attention, and that our whole solicitude should be by walking in the presence of God, fearing Him and keeping His commandments, to secure a favourable sentence in judgment at His tribunal, and attain eternal salvation.

4. Lastly, what above everything else shows us the value of salvation is, that it is the greatest and most excellent gift that God Himself has to bestow upon us. The power of Almighty God is above conception, without bounds. His riches are beyond measure, His liberality is equal to both, and His love to man excessive; for what but the most excessive love could make Him die upon a cross for us? Yet this God, so powerful, so rich, so liberal, so loving and good to men, after having done and suffered so much for us, has not in the immensity of His treasures a gift to bestow upon us more excellent and valuable in itself, more worthy and becoming Him to give, and more advantageous for us to receive, than to admit us to His Divine presence, to see and enjoy His infinite beauty, and in that blessed enjoyment to be eternally happy with Him in glory. Oh, how vain then, how empty, how unworthy of our regard, are all temporal things, compared to those eternal joys which await us in heaven! What signifies it what we suffer here, in our short and momentary pilgrimage through

this life, if we only arrive safely at the blissful enjoyment of our God hereafter? especially when we consider that "our present tribulation, which is momentary and light, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; whilst we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal," 2 Cor. iv. 17.

Section III.

Of the Importance of our last End.

Q. 9. Is it a matter of great importance to us to secure our salvation?

A. It is a matter of the greatest importance to us. Indeed it is the only affair of importance we have to think of, as will evidently appear from several convincing arguments. (1.) From its own excellence, which we have already seen, and on which we may here observe, that there is nothing wherein the goodness of God towards us appears in more amiable colours than in the glorious end for which He has created us. Other creatures around us on the earth have their being only for this world, and must end with time; but man is made to live when time shall be no more, and all shall be swallowed up in eternity. The hour will come when the sun, at present so beautiful and glorious, "shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be moved," Mat. xxiv. 29; when "the heavens shall pass away with great violence, and the elements shall be melted with heat, and the earth and the works that are in it shall be

burnt up," 2 Pet. iii. 10; when the plants, trees, and herbs of the field, and all their beauteous flowers, shall be utterly destroyed; when the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea, and all other creatures made for the use of man, shall cease to be, and shall all perish for ever. But man himself, if he attain the great end of his being, and secure his eternal salvation, will be for ever employed in praising his Creator, and enjoying unutterable bliss and happiness beyond conception, in beholding His Divine beauty.

The happiness of which other creatures are capable in this life consists only in the gratification of their senses—in the pleasure of eating, drinking, sleeping, and the like. They cannot contemplate the works of God, nor perceive the Divine perfections which shine forth in them; they cannot adore the hand that made them, nor enjoy the sublime happiness of loving and conversing with Him; but man even in this life is capable of knowing and loving his Creator, and knows that if he be faithful in His service here, he will enjoy His blissful company for eternity hereafter. "You have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end everlasting life," Rom. vi. 22. We must not imagine that we are created by God for no other end than to eat, drink, sleep, and enjoy the vain pleasures, the perishing riches, the transitory glory of this world. It would be thinking too meanly of the Supreme Being to suppose He would create creatures such as we are, capable of knowing and loving Him, contemplating His Divine perfections, of adoring Him and glorifying Him, and endowed with a desire of happiness which no created object can satisfy, for no other end than that for which He has created the beasts that perish. No, that is not the end for which we were created; but it is, to know God, to love and serve Him

whilst we are in this world, this school of probation; that by so doing we may come at last to enjoy Him in His kingdom, to be seated on a throne of glory with Jesus Christ, to be filled with the plenty of His house, to be inebriated with that torrent of delight which is only to be found in the possession of the God who made us, and in the enjoyment of His Divine perfections.

What can be more important, what of such consequence as to secure to ourselves this happiness, which, if we once attain, we shall possess for ever? Oh how does everything else appear as nothing, when put in competition with this! how do all temporal things become vile and worthless, insipid and distasteful, in presence of this eternal bliss! "What things were gain to me," says St Paul, "those I have counted loss for Christ. Farthermore, I count all things to be but loss, for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but as dung, that I may gain Christ," Philip, iii. 7. So ought every Christian to do who knows the sublime end of his creation: he ought to look upon all temporal things as loss, to despise and contemn them, that he may secure his eternal salvation.

We are placed in this world for no other end than to work out our salvation. Our time here will be but for a few years at most: we are here in this life only as in a place of banishment, kept at a distance from our heavenly country, our eternal habitation; we ought therefore to look upon ourselves here only as pilgrims and strangers left in this world as in a place of probation, where our great business is to fit and prepare ourselves for eternal bliss; to labour in this vineyard that we may obtain the promised reward; to run in the

race which is set before us that we may gain the prize; to fight against the enemies of our soul that we may secure to ourselves the incorruptible crown. This is our business here, our great work; and the importance of it will appear still further if we consider the following truths.

(2.) The business of securing our salvation is properly *our own business;* whatever else we do in the affairs of this world, is more doing the work of others than our own. Take a view of all the worldly employments of mankind, we shall find this to be universally true, that whatever toil and labour, whatever care and solicitude, they may bestow, all they can reap from their labours for themselves is only food and raiment, and, it may be, some sensual amusement; but the greater part of the fruit of their labour goes to others. It is true, some may have more delicate food and more costly raiment than others, but this does not necessarily make them more happy: the beggar with his rags and coarse fare often enjoys more real contentment, more solid happiness, than the king. What hardships, what dangers, does not the sailor undergo in the course of his long voyages! At last he returns home, with his ship laden with riches and the productions of foreign countries. But what fruit does he reap from all his labours! Some scanty pay, scarcely sufficient to provide food and raiment till he return to sea again; while the valuable things he has with so much toil and risk brought home, go to enrich the merchant who employed him. What toil, what fatigue, does not the soldier endure in the time of war! What danger is he not exposed to of losing his health, his members, his life itself! How does he renounce his very will itself, and become a slave to the will of his commanders! What fruit does he reap from all this? The glory of victory

goes to his king and officers, and the conquests he has made are distributed among others whom he does not know. Who can enumerate the labours and toils of the husbandman? His whole life is a continual circle of fatigue; and for whom does he labour? The profits of his toil go to enrich his landlord, while his portion is often barely sufficient to provide him with food and raiment. The same is universally the case in all the different states and employments of life; in all which we are doing much more for others than for ourselves.

It is true, indeed, in many cases, besides food and raiment, people gain riches by their labours; but this does not materially alter the case: frequently they either spend these riches in riotous living, or they hoard them up in their coffers. If they spend them in delicate or riotous living, what are they doing but benefiting others, by throwing their money into their hands? If they hoard up their treasures, for whom is all their labour? For those who come after them, who will seldom or ever think more of them—who will perhaps be as lavish in spending as they were careful in gathering—and who will be enjoying the fruits of their labours, and living upon them in mirth and jollity, while their own poor souls will, perhaps, be tormented in hell's devouring flames! It still remains a certain truth, therefore, that whatever worldly affair one is engaged in, he labours much more for others than for himself; it is the business of others he is doing rather than his own. With the important business of salvation it is not so: whatever pains we take there, the profit is our own; the fruit of our labour comes to ourselves, we reap the whole benefit of the toils we undergo. If we fast, and, with St Paul, chastise our body and bring it into subjection,—by so doing we pay off the debt we owe to the Divine justice, and hasten the time of our admis-

sion to eternal bliss. If we pray, our prayers draw down innumerable graces on our souls, and more effectually secure our salvation. If we give plenteous alms to the poor, this "purges away sin and delivers from death, and makes a man find mercy and life everlasting," Tob. xii. 9. Even a cup of cold water given for Christ's sake shall have a reward: here nothing is lost—everything returns with profit to our own bosom. "Blessed are all they that fear the Lord," says the Holy Scripture; "that walk in His ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thy hands: blessed art thou, and it shall be well with thee," Ps. cxxvii. 1. This being the case, how vastly more important is it for us to labour strenuously for our salvation, which is our own business, than for any worldly affair, which is the business of other people more than our own! And how great is the folly of those who give themselves up so wholly to their worldly affairs as to neglect the most important affair of their own salvation! What would we think of the master of a family, who should employ himself all the day in managing the affairs of others, and leave his own family at home neglected? What of a farmer, who should employ himself in improving his neighbour's land, and leave his own uncultivated? Such is our folly when we neglect our own affair, the affair of our salvation, and attend only to the concerns of this world, which are the affairs of others more than our own.

It is true, indeed, that our worldly affairs, such as belong to the state of life in which Providence has placed us, may be so managed as to contribute to our eternal salvation, and this is the end to which they ought always to be referred, and made subservient; but this is what evidently shows of how much greater importance our salvation is than they. They are but the means

to acquire salvation—have no merit in themselves, except in as far as they conduce to that great end. If not referred to it they are good for nothing; they are lost. But alas! how seldom are they used for this purpose! and here lies our great misfortune. Miserable will the poor wretch be at the hour of death, when, casting back his thoughts upon his past conduct, he finds that he has been exceedingly busy all his days for others, but has done nothing in his own great business, securing his salvation. He may have been of great service to his country, in gaining victories over its enemies, or in managing its public affairs; he may have been of service to his friends, in procuring them posts and places; to his children, in giving them a good education, and laying up a fortune for them;—but if with all this he has neglected his own soul, what is it all but labouring for others, and neglecting himself? And to him will be said at that tremendous moment on which eternity depends, "Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee; and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" Luke, xii. 20.

(3.) Our salvation is not only our own business, the affair that properly belongs to ourselves, but it is, in fact, *our only necessary business;* the only thing for which we were sent into this world. Our blessed Saviour declares this in His answer to Martha, when she seemed displeased at seeing her sister Mary so taken up with hearing Him, that she left her to toil alone: "Martha, Martha," said He, "thou art careful, and art troubled about many things; but one thing is necessary: Mary hath chosen the best part," Luke, x. 41. Our salvation is the one thing necessary; everything is trifling in comparison to this, and of no importance whether it be done or not, if we can only secure salvation. This is the

necessary business of all mankind—of the king and the beggar, the rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant. It is nowise necessary that a man be rich, learned, or great in the world, that he be of this or that employment, in one state of life or another; but it is absolutely necessary for all to work out their salvation. For this, and for this alone, we are in being; and better for us not to be at all than to lose it: as our Saviour Himself said of Judas, foreseeing his reprobation, "It were better for that man if he had not been born," Mat. xxvi. 24. All creatures around us were made only for this purpose, to serve us in this great business of our salvation; all our faculties, powers, and members, were given us only for this end. Our eyes were not given us to look at unlawful objects, and unjustly covet what belongs to others, but to behold the glorious works of God, in order to fill our hearts with gratitude and love to Him, and enable us to perform those duties of life which He requires of us, as the means to save our souls. Our ears were not given us to listen to detractions, calumnies, and sinful conversation, but to hear and learn the sacred laws of God, and enable us to discharge those duties of Christian charity which are necessary for acquiring salvation. Our tongue was not given us to profane the adorable name of God, or imprecate evil upon ourselves or others, but to be employed in praying to God and praising Him, and in performing those duties to our fellow-creatures which the law of God requires of us in order to be saved. Our time itself, our whole life, is given us for no other end but to save our souls; and all the wondrous things that God has done for us, whether in the order of nature or of grace, whether for soul or body, are all intended only for the same purpose. Whatever other business we are engaged in, however important it may seem in the eyes

of the deluded world, unless it conduce to our salvation, is of no worth or value, because it is lost for eternity! Our salvation is our only necessary affair, and to it everything else ought to yield.

(4.) But the vast importance and necessity of our salvation is principally shown from the dreadful consequences of losing it. "What will it profit a man," says Jesus Christ Himself, "if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Mark, viii. 36. Here it is indeed, above all, that we see of what immense importance it is, and how absolutely necessary to save our souls. Exalt the importance of all worldly affairs; look upon riches, pleasures, and honours as things of the highest value; put all the esteem on them that ever entered the heart of man, and suppose yourself master of the whole universe,—yet how soon must your enjoyment of this end! and when you die, what will it profit if you be buried in hell-fire, and condemned for ever to those eternal flames, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished; where there shall be nothing but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth; where fire, and brimstone, and snares shall be the portion of their cup; where the Lord Almighty shall give fire and worms into their flesh, that they may burn and feel for ever; where tribulation and anguish shall be their eternal inheritance; where they shall fall without honour, and be a reproach among the dead for ever; where shame shall cover them, and fear shall be upon every face; where they shall be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, with the cup of grief and sadness, and be made to drink it up even to the dregs; where they shall be salted with fire, and where the Lord shall make them as an oven of fire in the time of His anger; where they shall be made

a desolation and an astonishment, and a hissing and a curse; where they shall have no rest night or day, no comfort, no peace, no ease—no, not so much as a single drop of water to cool their parched tongues; where they shall seek death and shall not find it—they shall desire to die, and death shall fly from them; where they shall gnaw their tongues for pain, and blaspheme the God of heaven because of their pains and wounds; where, in fine, they shall be for ever banished from the presence of God, excluded from the kingdom of heaven, and eternally cut off from the joys of His saints, for which they were created? Gracious God! what a complication of miseries is this! Yet this is what the Word of God assures us will be the eternal portion of those who lose their salvation. What madness and folly, then, must it be to neglect that great, that important affair, or to expose it to the smallest danger of being lost, for any consideration in this world! Or what is there in the world that can bear the smallest proportion in worth or importance to the salvation of our souls? What madness to deliver up our souls into the hands of their enemies, to ruin ourselves, and make ourselves for ever miserable, for the momentary and trifling enjoyments of this place of banishment! If any worldly affair miscarry, the loss may be repaired; and if not, we may have many other advantages to comfort us, and salvation will superabundantly make up for all: but if we lose our salvation, it is lost for ever. The loss is irreparable, nor is it possible to find any comfort under it; for "what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" If that be lost, all good is lost, and misery and woe must be our portion for ever. Oh! let us then remember that we have but *one soul*, which, if we lose, we ourselves are lost for ever. We can die but *one death*, upon which eternity depends; and if

we die ill, there is no salvation for us. There is but *one Judge*, upon whose sentence our final doom depends; and if He give sentence against us, there is no appeal from His tribunal. *One only sentence* will be passed upon us; and if it be not the happy sentence of "Come, ye blessed of My Father," it must of necessity be that other, "Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire!" There is but *one heaven*, where the blessed shall be happy for ever, from which if we be excluded, our portion must necessarily be in the torments of hell. There is but *one eternity*, which, if it be not for us one of bliss, must infallibly be an eternity of misery and woe. What an important affair, then, is our salvation! "Oh that men would be wise and understand, and would provide for their last end!" Deut. xxxii. 29.

Section IV.

Of the Difficulty of acquiring our last End.

Q. 10. Is it an easy matter to save our souls and acquire our last end?

A. Nothing is more unreasonable than the conduct of worldly people on this point. If you exhort them to amend their lives and embrace a life of Christian virtue and piety, they immediately oppose the great difficulties of such a life, and how hard a matter it is to work out their salvation, the thought of which astonishes and discourages them, sometimes even throws them into despair. If, on the other hand, you represent to them the danger of delay in a matter of so great importance, and especially the danger of a death-bed repentance, they immediately reply that God is merciful, that He wills not the death of a sinner, and that one act of repentance in their

last moments will be sure to find acceptance, and make up their peace with God. Thus they are persuaded that the way of salvation is extremely difficult; and they act as if nothing were more easy than to work out their salvation. The truth is, the road to salvation is both difficult and easy; and they abuse the different senses in which it is so to their own perdition.

To acquire salvation is a most difficult matter to those who are slaves to their passions, attached to the enjoyments of this world, and immersed in sensuality and carnal pleasures; but it is easy to those who know its value, and place their affections on God and eternal goods. It is difficult to flesh and blood, and to all the perverse dispositions of our corrupt nature; but it is easy to a man who, by Christian vigilance and repeated victories over nature, has corrected the disorders of the heart, and brought the body into proper subjection. In a word, it is difficult at the beginning to those who, like young Samuel, "do not yet, experimentally, know the Lord, and to whom the interior word of the Lord has not yet been revealed," 1 Kings, iii. 7. But it is easy, delightful, to those who, with David, "taste and know how good the Lord is, and what a multitude of sweetness He has hidden for those that fear Him." Now these last stand in little or no need of exhortations to encourage them to a virtuous life. Carried on by the wings of holy love, and knowing from their own blessed experience what happiness is found in the service of God, they are ready to sacrifice all that is near or dear to them in this world rather than abandon it; nay, the more they have to suffer for God's sake, the more their joy and consolation abound. But worldly-minded persons who live in sin, and lukewarm Christians who live in a kind of indifference about their souls, have great need indeed to be

roused from their insensibility, and encouraged by every consideration which can make any impression upon them. At the same time, it would be a dangerous encouragement and fatal delusion to lead them to imagine that the securing their salvation is a matter of no difficulty, and that they can attend to it at any time they please: this would only confirm them in their folly, and encourage them either to put off that important business from day to day, till they be surprised in their sins and lost for ever; or else to begin with so much coldness and tepidity, as never to take any effectual step to secure it. To them the great work of salvation is a work of difficulty, and requires the strongest resolution and their utmost efforts to do anything effectual in it. And the longer they delay, the greater the difficulty becomes; for by delay their bad habits are strengthened, their passions become more violent, their attachment to sinful objects confirmed, the power the devil acquires over them is greater, and they themselves become more and more unworthy of the assistance of God's grace, from their continued abuse of His mercy. But however great the difficulty may be at present, it ought by no means to discourage them; on the contrary, it ought the more effectually to incite them to begin that great work without delay, and to begin in earnest. Their all is at stake; the delay of a day may prove their eternal ruin! certainly it will make their labour more difficult! At present God offers them mercy and all necessary assistance; but if they reject His offer now, who knows if it will afterwards be made to them? The work is difficult, and they are weak; but God is strong, and "we can do all things through Him that strengthens us!" His grace will never be wanting to us, if we be not wanting to it! but if we reject it when He offers, we render ourselves unworthy of it!

The work is difficult! but it is not impossible; for "God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear, but with the temptation will make issue, that we may come off with victory," 1 Cor. x. 13. The work is difficult! but it is of the utmost importance, and of absolute necessity; therefore we ought to set about it with the greater vigour, and the most determined resolution to sacrifice everything else to accomplish it. Finally, the work is difficult! but its difficulty is only in the beginning; and when that is courageously overcome, and we are fairly "entered into the paths of righteousness, our steps shall no longer be straitened," as the Holy Ghost Himself assures us, Prov. iv. 11. It is a yoke, but it is the yoke of Christ; He will bear it with us, and He assures us that in His company it is sweet and easy. These are the sentiments with which the difficulties of a virtuous life ought to inspire us, if we apprehend, as we ought, the importance of our salvation, and how much it behoves us to take every necessary means to secure it.

Q. 11. What idea does the Scripture give of the difficulty of attaining our salvation?

A. Our blessed Master thought it highly necessary to instruct us fully on this point, in order to animate us to be the more earnest about it: and He forewarns us of the difficulties, that we may not be discouraged when we meet with them; but at the same time He assures us of all necessary assistance both to enable us to overcome them, and to sweeten the bitterness of them. These last we have seen at large, Chap. IV. We shall now see how He describes the difficulties. And, (1.) From His similitudes and parables. He proposes our salvation to us as a glorious kingdom, but a kingdom which "suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away," Mat. xi.

12. He compares it to a noble edifice, but tells us we must "renounce all we possess," to defray the charges of the building, otherwise we cannot be His disciples, Luke, xiv. 33. He likens it to a delicious supper prepared by a great man to entertain his friends, but assures us that no worldly concern must hinder us from accepting the invitation—neither farm, nor merchandise, nor marriage; declaring, "none of those who are invited, and are detained by such excuses, shall taste of His supper," Luke, xiv. 24. He tells us that our salvation is like to a pearl of great price, a treasure hid in a field; but assures us that we must sell all we have to purchase it, and even rejoice in doing so, Mat. xiii. 44. (2.) From His express declarations, and the strict command He lays upon all His followers to deny themselves, to mortify their passions, to bear their cross, and the like, as we have seen above, Chap. IV. Q. 4, through the whole. From which it is evident, that the road to salvation is most difficult to our corrupt nature, hard to flesh and blood; and therefore our blessed Saviour Himself exclaims, with a kind of astonishment, "How narrow is the gate and strait the way that leadeth to life, and few there are that find it!" Mat. vii. 14.

Q. 12. What consequences does the Scripture draw from this difficulty of securing our salvation?

A. Not that we ought to be discouraged by it, or hindered from undertaking this great and important business; but, on the contrary, that we should be excited to apply to it with greater fervour, resolution, and perseverance. Thus, (1.) "A certain man said to Jesus, Lord, are they few that are saved? But He said to them, Strive to enter by the narrow gate; for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter, and shall not be able," Luke, xiii. 23. Here we see that from the very difficulty He

exhorts them to set about it in good earnest—"Strive," says He—that is, contend, use all your endeavour, strain every nerve. It is not enough "to seek," in a work of such difficulty: "many shall seek," but that will not do, because they do not "strive." They shall not be able to enter. He then goes on to animate them in their good endeavours, from the vast importance of the business, setting before their eyes the dreadful consequences of failure. (2.) St Paul reasons in the same manner: he shows us the difficulty, by proposing our salvation as a prize for which we must run, and as a crown for which we must fight; but for that very reason concludes how diligent we should be to run well and fight bravely, and confirms his conclusion by his own example: "Know you not," says he, "that they that run in a race all run indeed, but one receiveth the prize? So run that you may obtain. And every one that striveth for the mastery refraineth himself from all things: and they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible one! I therefore so run, not as at an uncertainty; I so fight, not as one beating the air: but I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection, lest perhaps when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway," 1 Cor. ix. 24. (3.) Whatever progress this holy apostle made, he never relaxed in his fervour, but went on daily striving and daily advancing; and he exhorts all to follow his example: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but one thing I do; forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before, I press towards the mark, to the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded. . . . Be followers of me, brethren," Philip. iii. 13. (4.) He exhorts us pressingly

to this perseverance from the example of Christ and the greatness of the prize, saying, "Laying aside every weight, and the sin that surroundeth us, let us run by patience to the fight that is set before us; looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, Who, having joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and sitteth on the right hand of the throne of God: for think diligently upon Him That endureth such opposition from sinners against Himself, that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds," Heb. xii. 1. (5.) Our blessed Saviour conjures us not only to strive in this great business, and persevere in striving, but to be always ready, always on the watch—never to relax our efforts, never to be found sleeping, nor give way to the allurements of flesh and blood—lest we be found unprepared and lost for ever. This He sets forth to us in the most affecting manner in different similitudes and parables; as that of the master coming upon his servants at an unexpected hour, Mat. xxiv 42; that of the foolish virgins waiting for the bridegroom, Mat. xxv. 1; also of the man going to a far country, on which He says—"Watch ye, therefore, for you know not when the Lord of the house cometh; at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning; lest coming on a sudden he find you sleeping. And what I say to you I say to all, Watch," Mark, xiii. 35. And particularly, from the uncertainty of the day of our death, where He speaks thus: "Take heed to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly; for as a snare shall it come upon all that sit upon the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, praying at all times, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that are to come, and to stand before the Son of Man,"

Luke, xxi. 34. (6.) Finally, St Peter thus presses upon us to be diligent in this great work, from the hopes of the reward: "Wherefore, brethren, labour the more, that by good works you may make your calling and election sure; for so an entrance shall be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," 2 Pet. i. 10. And St Paul exhorts us to do this with fear and trembling, considering the danger of failure, and to put our whole confidence in the goodness of Almighty God, with whose assistance all will be easy for us: "With fear and trembling work out your salvation; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish according to His good will," Philip. ii. 12. And no wonder that the utmost diligence in this duty is recommended to us; "for if the just man shall scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" 1 Pet. iv. 18.

Section V.

The Consequences which follow from the Excellence and Importance of our last End.

Q. 13. What are the consequences that necessarily flow from the excellence and vast importance of our salvation?

A. Whoever reflects seriously on what we have seen above—on the immense value of our salvation—on the endless duration of eternity, and on what it is to be eternally happy or eternally miserable, cannot fail to see, in their strongest light, the important consequences which flow from these truths. Indeed the most sublime rules of Christian morality, both for regulating our judgment

and directing our practice, are founded on them. We shall here consider some of the most necessary.

1. Seeing that our salvation is a good more excellent than all that this world can afford—the greatest good that God Himself can bestow; and seeing it is of such immense importance to us, that if we lose it we must be eternally miserable,—who does not see that it is an imperative duty to esteem and prefer our salvation before everything else? nay, that we must be void of reason, judgment, and sense, to prefer anything else to it? Is it not the rule we follow in earthly concerns, to esteem and prefer that most which is in itself most valuable and useful? Does not common-sense, and the very feelings of our heart, impel us to this? Seeing, therefore, that our salvation surpasses everything else, both in its own excellence and its importance to us, we ought to prefer it to everything. What the wise man says of his esteem for that heavenly wisdom, which is but the means to attain salvation, shows what we ought, with much greater reason, to say of our esteem for salvation itself, which is the great end to which that wisdom conducts: "I preferred wisdom," says he, "before kingdoms and thrones, and esteemed riches nothing in comparison to her. Neither did I compare her to any precious stone; for all gold, in comparison of her, is as a little sand; and silver, in respect to her, shall be counted as clay. I loved her above health and beauty, and chose to have her instead of light; for her light cannot be put out. . . . For she is an infinite treasure to men, which they that use become friends of God," Wis. vii. 8. Now, if wisdom was so much esteemed and preferred before everything because it makes us friends of God, how much more ought we to esteem and prefer our salvation, by which we are put in possession of God, transformed into the image of His

glory, and inseparably united with Him, in unspeakable happiness, for eternity! St Paul, sensible of this, declares that "he counted all things to be but loss; that he counted them all as dung, that he might gain Christ," Philip. iii. 8. From which we see that we ought not only to prefer salvation to everything else, but to esteem it as the *only* object worthy of our regard, and look upon all things else as a little sand, a mere nothing—as so far below it in real worth and importance, that there can be no comparison between them.

2. It follows that this preference which we give to our salvation ought to be the supreme rule and standard by which we are to form our judgment of everything else. For it is self-evident that if our salvation be so excellent and important, that in comparison of it no earthly object has any intrinsic value, nothing ought to be esteemed a real good that does not conduce to salvation; and nothing ought to be deemed an evil but what deprives us of it, or puts us in danger of losing it: and the more anything conduces to salvation, the greater good ought we to esteem it; as, on the contrary, the more anything leads us from or endangers our salvation, we ought to consider it the greater evil. Hence it follows, (1.) that as we have seen, Chap. IV. Q. 3. No. 5, how much worldly prosperity is an enemy to our salvation, and that wealth and earthly pleasures are dangerous, and pernicious to the soul, we ought not to look upon them as real goods, but dangerous evils; and consequently, laying aside all "solicitude about what we shall eat, or what we shall drink, or wherewithal we shall be clothed"—as Jesus Christ so warmly enjoins us, Mat. vi. 31—we should labour according to the will of God in that state of life in which He has placed us, to procure such food and raiment as His blessed providence shall be pleased to afford us, and

therewith be contented. (2.) As we have also seen, Chap. IV. Q. 9, how much the tribulations and afflictions of life contribute both to our spiritual happiness here and to our salvation hereafter, that therefore we ought to look upon them as real goods, and to embrace them as such, instead of flying from them. And though the weakness of our nature may not have courage to seek them, yet we should cheerfully receive them when sent by God. (3.) That as sin is the only thing which effectually ruins our salvation, we ought to have the utmost abhorrence and detestation of it, and cheerfully undergo all temporal evil, rather than be guilty of it. The saints of God were so much convinced of this, that many not only suffered the loss of all that was near or dear to them, laying down their lives in the greatest torments, rather than offend God by sin; but some have even declared that they would rather be plunged headlong into the flames of hell in their innocence, than commit a mortal sin to avoid it. And indeed, if no man would drink a cup of deadly poison even for a kingdom, how much more ought we to reject, with horror, the commission of a mortal sin, though to gain the whole world? for mortal sin kills the soul, and "what will it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Mark, viii. 36. (4.) That we ought not only to fly from and abhor sin itself as the greatest of all evils, but also to avoid with horror all the occasions of sin, and all danger of being exposed to sin. What man would wantonly expose any earthly treasure to the danger of being lost? Who, for any worldly advantage, would venture to walk upon the brink of a dreadful precipice, where, if he slipped, he must fall down and be crushed to pieces? how much more ought we to abhor and fly from the danger of sin, when God Himself declares to us that "he that loves the

danger shall perish in it"? Ecclus. iii. 27. (5.) From the same principle we learn the judgment we ought to form of the books we read—of the company we frequent—of the recreations and amusements we use—of the employments and state of life we embrace—and, in short, of everything in which we engage. These are to be esteemed good and laudable only when they contribute to salvation, and tend to the good of the soul; but if they have a contrary tendency, and expose our souls to danger, we ought to abhor them as real evils, whatever pleasure or advantage our self-love may receive from them.

3. From the excellence and importance of salvation it follows, in the third place, that we ought to have a great and ardent desire to obtain it. Nature itself dictates to us, or rather impels us, to desire any good which we esteem highly, especially if it depend upon ourselves to acquire it. If, therefore, we have that just sense and esteem of our salvation which it deserves, it must naturally excite in our hearts the most sincere and fervent desires of securing it. If, like the saints of God, we were persuaded that our salvation is our supreme and sovereign good, like them we would desire it above all things else. If with them we firmly believe that salvation is our *only real good, our only perfect happiness* and last end, with them we will also desire it with our whole soul, as the only object worthy of our desires and affections. The goods of this life would become insipid, the world would be a place of banishment for us, and our hearts and affections being fixed on things above, our wishes and sighs would only be for heaven, our true country. David was filled with these holy sentiments: "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after Thee, my God. My soul hath thirsted

after the strong living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of God?" Ps. xli. 1. "O my God, to Thee do I watch at break of day. For Thee my soul hath thirsted, for Thee my flesh, O how many ways!" Ps. lxii. 1. "How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God," Ps. lxxxiii. 1. In like manner St Paul, longing after the happiness of seeing God, and desirous of doing good to souls by his apostolic labours, suffers a strong conflict in his own mind. "I am straitened," says he, "between two; having a desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, a thing by far the better: but to abide still in the flesh is needful for you," Philip. i. 23. Now this ardent desire of salvation, which our Saviour compares to that of hunger and thirst, is of the greatest advantage to us, because one of the principal means of obtaining it from God: for "blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled," Mat. v. 7; and God "filleth the hungry with good things," Luke, i. 53; and the Scripture assures us that such ardent desires are the most effectual means of procuring that heavenly wisdom which brings us to God, and puts us in possession of salvation. "Wisdom is easily seen by them that love her, and is found by them that seek her. She preventeth them that covet her, so that she first showeth herself to them. . . . The beginning of her is the most true desire of discipline. . . . The desire of wisdom bringeth to the everlasting kingdom," Wis. vi. 13. Hence we may see how careful we ought to be to excite and nourish in our souls the most ardent desire of salvation, by often meditating on the vanity and nothingness of temporal things, that we may the more heartily despise them; and on the excellence, the dignity, and import-

ance of things eternal, that we may love, esteem, and desire them.

4. This earnest desire of salvation must not be confined to the heart alone. It must be an efficacious desire—a desire that proceeds to action, impelling us to do with diligence whatever God requires in order to obtain salvation. It is a natural consequence of our having an earnest desire of any good object, to be active and diligent in using the means to acquire it. What do not the slaves of the world both do and suffer to obtain those earthly goods which they esteem and desire? How much more ought we cheerfully to do and suffer for salvation? Mere desires alone, if they can be called desires, will never bring us to that happiness, but, with "the wicked and slothful servant, will end in utter darkness" and eternal misery, Mat. xxv. 26; for "desires kill the slothful; his hands refuse to work at all; he longeth and desireth all the day," Prov. xxi. 25. "The sluggard willeth and willeth not; but the soul of them that work shall be made fat," Prov. xiii. 4. Hence the Scriptures, showing us how the desire of wisdom brings us to the everlasting kingdom, make this beautiful gradation of the active steps to be taken for this purpose: "The beginning of wisdom is the most true desire of discipline; and the care of discipline is love; and love is the keeping of her laws; and the keeping of her laws is the firm foundation of incorruption; and incorruption bringeth near to God: therefore the desire of wisdom bringeth to an everlasting kingdom," Wis. vi. 18. And to show how diligent we ought to be in this great work, and how much depends upon our being so, the wise man says: "If thou shalt call for wisdom, and incline thy ear to prudence; if thou shalt seek her as money, and shalt dig for her as a treasure; then shalt thou understand the fear of the

Lord, and shalt find the knowledge of God," Prov. ii. 3. Empty desires of such an immense good as is found in the possession of God, rather mock God than honour Him: they show rather that we despise than esteem Him. In all our worldly affairs the means we use either to acquire, augment, or preserve the good things we love, are always proportioned to the love and esteem we have for them. If we esteem them little, we take little pains about them; but if we esteem them much, we use the greater diligence; and if we have a very great esteem for them, and an ardent desire of acquiring them, we never fail to use the most efficacious means, and we spare neither pains nor labour to procure them. Witness the behaviour of a man who has a passion for riches: witness all those who are slaves to lust and ambition, or any other violent passion. What they do and suffer shows the greatness of their esteem, and the violence of their desires to obtain the object of their wishes. If, therefore, we pretend to esteem our salvation as it deserves, and to desire above all things to see and enjoy God, but yet take no pains to acquire this happiness, what judgment will God form of such esteem? what value will He put upon such desires? We must therefore call to mind the words of St Paul: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked. For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap. For he that soweth in his flesh, of the flesh also shall reap corruption. But he that soweth in the Spirit, of the Spirit shall reap life everlasting. And in doing good, let us not fail; for in due time we shall reap, not failing," Gal. vi. 7.

5. But if we go a step further, and reflect that our salvation is not only an affair of the greatest value and excellence in itself, not only a business of the greatest importance to us, but that it is the ONE THING NE-

CESSARY—the only business for which we have our being, the only end for which God has placed us in this world; and that all our senses, powers, and faculties are only given us as helps to secure it; that all the other creatures around us are made for no other end but only to serve as means to enable us to secure it; and that our time itself, our whole life, is bestowed upon us for this only purpose of working out our salvation;—if, I say, we have a just sense and full conviction of these truths, and add to all this, that it is an affair of great difficulty to flesh and blood, that it requires all our endeavours, and that God Almighty Himself judges our whole lifetime necessary to complete this great work—we cannot fail to see that we ought not only to labour diligently to save our souls, but that this great work ought to have the preference to everything else; that it ought to be our only employment, engross our whole attention, and that everything else ought to be referred to this, and made subservient to it. In fact, if this be the only affair of absolute necessity—if all the other affairs of life have no real merit or value, and are all lost for eternity, unless they be of service to salvation—is it not evident that this alone ought to engross all our attention, and that everything else ought to be done in such manner as to be subservient to this? This was the judgment made by Jesus Christ Himself, when, after exhorting us to lay aside all solicitude for even the necessaries of life, He says, "Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God, and His justice," Mat. vi. 33. Seek ye first the kingdom of God; the kingdom of God is the salvation of our souls. This He commands us to seek first—that is, in the first place, above all earthly things; but He says nothing of what we are to seek next: nay, He assures us, if we seek first our salvation, that all the necessaries

of life shall be added to us, without our being solicitous in seeking after them; and therefore it is plain that by seeking first the kingdom of God, He means that we ought to seek it *only;* that everything else should be sought *only* with reference to it, as the great and ultimate end of all we do. Our Saviour adds,—"Seek first the kingdom of God, and His justice;" the justice of God is the accomplishment of His will, by obedience to His commandments. To seek the justice of God, then, is to love, serve, and obey Him, as the necessary and only means to secure our salvation. He commands us, then, to seek *first* the kingdom of God and His justice, to show us that our chief, our only employment, ought to be with all diligence and attention to love, serve, and obey God here—that is, to glorify Him in this life, that we may enjoy Him in His kingdom in the life to come.

To glorify God and to save our souls are two things essentially united: it is impossible to glorify God here, in the way He requires, without infallibly saving our souls hereafter; and it is impossible to save our souls hereafter but by glorifying God while we remain in this mortal life; and therefore our Saviour joins them together in the above text, as the great employment which ought to occupy our whole attention. St Peter, sensible of this obligation, exhorts us, in whatever we speak or do, to refer all to this great end. "If any man speak," says he, "let him speak as the words of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the power which God administereth, that in all things God may be honoured, through Jesus Christ," 1 Pet. iv. 11.

St Paul also shows us in what light we ought to view the goods or evils of this world, and in what manner we ought to use them: "This therefore I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth that they also who have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as

though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as they that rejoice not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as though they used it not: for the fashion of this world passeth away," 1 Cor. vii. 29. He begins by reminding us that "the time is short,"—that our whole life, especially what may yet remain of it, is short for the great work of our salvation; and therefore that we ought by no means to occupy our thoughts with the trifling things of this life, so as to neglect that great work, but use them as if we used them not, always remembering how vain and transitory they are, and that the fashion of this world and of all it contains soon passeth away.

A little after he shows us what ought to occupy our attention in everything we do. "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God," 1 Cor. x. 31. "All whatsoever you do in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him," Col. iii. 17. Behold how forcibly he shows us our great obligation of referring everything we do to God, and consequently to our salvation! and is not this what God Himself declares by His prophet Moses? "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength; and those words which I command thee this day shall be in thy heart; and thou shalt tell them to thy children; and thou shalt meditate upon them, sitting in thy house, and walking in thy journey, sleeping and rising; and thou shalt bind them as a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be, and shall move between thy eyes, and thou shalt write them in the entry and on the doors of thy house," Deut. vi. 4. See here how God requires that we be continually employed in the great work of our salvation, that it enter

into everything we do, and that everything else be made subservient to it! Hear also how the wise man exhorts us not to occupy our thoughts with things that do not concern us, but to employ them continually on the great and important affair of our salvation: "Seek not the things that are too high for thee, and search not into things above thy ability; but the things that God hath commanded thee, think on them always, and in many of His works be not curious. For it is not necessary for thee to see with thy eyes the things that are hid. In unnecessary things be not over-curious, and in many of His works thou shalt not be inquisitive; for many things are shown to thee above the understanding of men; and the suspicion of them hath deceived many, and hath detained their minds in vanity," Ecclus. iii. 22. Wherefore, "in all thy ways think upon God, and He will direct thy steps," Prov. iii. 6. For the same reason Almighty God Himself declares that we ought to glory in no earthly thing, however it may abound with us, but that all our joy and glory ought to be in Him alone. "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, and let not the strong man glory in his strength, and let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me; for I am the Lord," Jer. ix. 23. Seeing, then, that every Christian is bound to believe these Divine truths, or to renounce his religion, what must we think of many Christians who throw away those precious moments given them to work out their salvation in idle, useless, dangerous, and often sinful employments, and amusements? Oh, how bitter will their regret one day be, when they shall see with their eyes what they now profess to believe, and compare what they have been with what they ought to have been!

6. There remains yet another consequence no less important than those we have already seen, which is, that we not only ought to make all the things of this life subservient to our salvation, and in our worldly affairs perform all we do with reference to this great end, but that we ought to be ready, if necessary, to sacrifice everything in life—goods, friends, honour, ease, health—even life itself, to secure our salvation. Does this seem too great a sacrifice? The world itself will condemn us if we think so. What does not the world require of its votaries to gain and preserve the goods it offers them? What do not the slaves of the world sacrifice to gain them? Does not the covetous man sacrifice his ease, repose, reputation, the very enjoyment of the necessaries of life, to fill his coffers? Do not the gamester and the drunkard sacrifice their time, their money, their peace of mind, their honour, their health, and often life itself, to the indulgence of their passions? Does not the ambitious man sacrifice his ease, his health, his life, to worldly glory? What is still more deplorable, do not all these worldlings, in many cases, sacrifice religion, conscience, and their soul itself, to their worldly ends? And shall a Christian think it too hard to sacrifice all temporal things for his salvation?

Let us hear what Jesus Christ Himself has declared: "Every one that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be My disciple," Luke, xiv. 33. "He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me; he that loveth son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me. He that taketh not up his cross and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me," Mat. x. 37. "If any man come to Me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple,"

Luke, xiv. 26—that is, who is not willing to renounce them when they endanger his salvation by withdrawing him from God. "If thy right eye cause thee to offend" (*that is, if it be a stumbling-block or occasion of sin to thee*), "pluck it out and cast it from thee: for it is better for thee that one of thy members should perish than that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand cause thee to offend, cut it off and cast it from thee: for it is better for thee that one of thy members should perish than that thy whole body should go into hell," Mat. v. 29. See here the doctrine of Jesus Christ on this important subject. Could He express in stronger terms our strict obligation to sacrifice everything in this world—possessions, friends, relations, members, life itself—rather than offend Him and forfeit our salvation?

St Paul, who well knew the force of his blessed Master's words, shows us his own dispositions, and those of all true Christians on this head, in the most expressive manner: "Who shall separate us," says he, "from the love of Christ? shall tribulation? shall distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword? . . . But in all these things we overcome, because of Him that hath loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus," Rom. viii. 35. These are the noble sentiments of a true Christian—of one who knows what salvation is, and what immense incomparable happiness and bliss are to be found in Christ Jesus. Neither is it in words only that this great apostle teaches us this duty; he confirms it by his own example. "What things,"

says he, "were gain to me, those I have counted loss for Christ. Furthermore, I count all things to be but loss, for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord, for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as dung that I may gain Christ," Philip, iii. 7. In the eleventh chapter of his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, he recounts his many sufferings endured for Christ's sake; and at last he laid down his life by the hands of heathen persecutors that he might be united to his beloved Master.

How many thousands have done the same in the Church of Christ in all ages for the sake of God, and to secure their salvation! How many kings and princes have sacrificed their crowns! How many rich persons have renounced their treasures! How many glorious martyrs have cheerfully sacrificed their lives in the midst of torments rather than offend God and endanger their salvation! All these had a just sense of the value of eternal happiness—of the importance of salvation; they knew that nothing in this world was comparable to it, and therefore cheerfully sacrificed all that was dear to them in life in order to secure it. Nor has it been since our Saviour's time only that the world has seen such examples: numbers of God's holy servants, even from the beginning, have acted similarly when there was a question of securing their salvation. St Paul gives us a long catalogue of them in his Epistle to the Hebrews, and shows how their lively faith in the truths of eternity enabled them to undergo the severest trials to save their souls. "Some," says he, "were racked, not accepting deliverance; . . . others had trials of mockeries and stripes, moreover also of bonds and prisons; they were stoned, they were cut asunder, they were tempted, they were put to death by the

sword; they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being in want, distressed, afflicted; of whom the world was not worthy; wandering in deserts, in mountains, in dens and caves of the earth," Heb. xi. 35. And all this for what end? He tells us, "That they might find a better resurrection," ver. 35—that they might secure their salvation!

How glorious among these examples is that of the venerable Eleazar! He, at the age of fourscore and ten years, was commanded by a heathen prince to eat meats forbidden by the law, and threatened with a cruel death if he refused; but "he," says the Scripture, "choosing rather a most glorious death than a hateful life, went forward of his own accord to the torment: and determined not to do any unlawful thing for the love of life," 2 Mac. vi. 19. And when his friends out of compassion proposed to bring to him privately meats that could lawfully be eaten, that he might appear to have complied and so to save his life, he rejected such dissimulation with disdain, and said, "He would rather be sent into the other world;" giving this noble reason for his refusal: "For though, for the present time, I should be delivered from the punishments of men, yet should I not escape the hand of the Almighty neither alive nor dead," ver. 26. "And he was forthwith led to the execution. . . . And when he was now ready to die with the stripes, he groaned and said, O Lord, who hast the holy knowledge, Thou knowest manifestly, that whereas I might be delivered from death, I suffer grievous pains in body; but in soul am well content to suffer these things, because I fear Thee," ver. 30. What a noble example of the effects of a lively sense of the great value of salvation!

Glorious, also, is the example of the seven brothers

with their mother, who along with Eleazar suffered the most cruel torments, and encountered death with the most heroic constancy, rather than comply with the impious command of the king and lose their souls; animating themselves in their torments with the firm hope of a happy resurrection. "But the King of the world will raise us up, who die for His laws," said one of them, "in the resurrection of eternal life," 2 Mac. vii. 9. And when another was ordered to present his tongue and hands to be cut off, he did it courageously, "and said with confidence, These I have from heaven, but for the laws of God I now despise them, because I hope to receive them again from Him," ver. 11. The mother was particularly to be admired, who exhorts them all in these words: "I know not how you were formed in my womb; for I neither gave you breath, nor soul, nor life, neither did I frame the limbs of every one of you. But the Creator of the world, that formed the nativity of man, and that found out the origin of all, He will restore to you again in His mercy, both breath and life, as now you despise yourselves for the sake of His laws," ver. 22. And when the youngest was at last brought to torture, the king, finding that neither threats nor promises could move him, called the mother, and counselled her to persuade her son to comply with his orders, and save his life. But she, going to the young man, said to her son, in her own language, "My son, have pity upon me that bore thee nine months in my womb, and gave thee suck three years, and nourished thee and brought thee up unto this age. I beseech thee, my son, look upon heaven and earth, and all that is in them, and consider that God made them out of nothing, and mankind also; so thou shalt not fear this tormentor, but being made a worthy partner with thy brethren, receive

death, that in that mercy I may receive thee again with thy brethren," ver. 27. Behold the esteem these saints had for their salvation, and with what cheerfulness they sacrificed all for its sake! Yet these lived some hundreds of years before Christ; they had not learned His heavenly doctrine, nor had they His Divine example; and yet, to secure a glorious resurrection, they renounced everything in this world, and sacrificed their life in the midst of cruel torments! What a reproach, then, before God and His holy angels, and all these blessed martyrs, if we Christians should think any sacrifice too great for eternal happiness!

7. Lastly, we must observe one thing more on this subject. We have seen the immense value of salvation, how unspeakably important it is, and that obedience to the commands of God is absolutely necessary to obtain it. What a powerful motive to make us diligent and solicitous to obey them! Our eternal happiness depends upon our obedience; there is no salvation without it. How strongly, then, does both duty and interest combine to incite us to it! We are obliged in the strictest justice to obey the law of God, because He has the most unlimited dominion and the most absolute authority over us as our Creator, our preserver, and our last end. We are obliged to obey Him from the strongest ties of gratitude, because He is our greatest, our only benefactor; and out of the ardent love He bears us, has done infinitely more to make us happy than it could ever have entered into our heart to ask. We are obliged to obey Him for our own interest, because our real happiness in this world, and our eternal happiness in the world to come, depend entirely upon our doing so. And is it possible we can believe these truths, and yet offend our God, or ever dare to transgress His commandments?

Q. 14. Indeed, one would think it impossible that a Christian who believes these truths could ever offend God. But how comes it that Christians are so unhappy as to do so?

A. This is owing to the power and malice of the enemies of our salvation, and to the negligence of Christians in not fortifying themselves against their snares by serious meditation on the truths of eternity, and other holy exercises. By this neglect their faith in the above truths becomes languid and dead; and thus they fall an easy prey to these enemies, and are dragged by them, like sheep to the slaughter, into eternal ruin. These enemies are the devil, the world, and the flesh, on each of which we shall make some few useful observations in the following chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ENEMIES OF OUR SALVATION.

Q. 1. WHICH of these three enemies is the most dangerous to our souls?

A. Our own flesh is certainly the most dangerous of the three, both because it is a domestic enemy which we always carry about us, and cannot fly from, and also because it is principally by its means that the other two gain so easily the advantage over us. Now on this we must observe:—

1. By the flesh is meant our corrupt nature, our self-love, and all its passions; that bent and propensity of our nature to everything which gratifies our sensuality and pride; in a word, our love and attachment to the enjoyments of this life,—to understand which we must remember that, as we have seen above, Chap. II., it is the great and essential duty of all mankind, arising from their very existence itself, and from the end for which they were created, to love, serve, and obey God, to study in everything to please Him, and "whether they eat or drink, or whatever else they do, to do all to His glory," and to fulfil the will of Him that made them. In the state of innocence man had no difficulty in fulfilling this duty; his heart was upright with God, he had Him

before his eyes in all he did, and it was his delight to please Him continually. But by sin we lost that happy union with God; our hearts were corrupted and violently bent upon seeking their own pleasure, interest, and glory, instead of the interest, pleasure, and glory of God. Hence arises that strong attachment to riches, to sensual pleasure, to the liberty of acting according to our own will, to the esteem and praise of the world, to curiosity, to ease, and to everything else that is pleasing and agreeable to nature; and this is what is meant by the flesh or self-love. Now, as the whole tendency of the law of God is to recover our lost union with God, and to bring back our love and affection to Him, and as this is diametrically opposed to the inclinations of self-love, we find great difficulty in complying with the law of God, and experience violent opposition from ourselves in doing so. Our love of liberty can brook no restraint; our pride, our avarice, our love of ease and pleasure, strongly incline us to seek only such objects as are pleasing; and these passions, being deeply interwoven with our nature, blind our reason, or engage it to favour them, and hurry us on to act for their own satisfaction, forgetful or regardless of God, and of what we owe to Him. The Scriptures reduce all our depraved affections to three general heads — *the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh*, and *the pride of life*. These are the three great branches of self-love.

2. The effects which self-love and its lusts produce in the soul are many and dangerous. (1.) They darken our understanding and pervert our judgment, persuading us that those things are real goods which flatter self-love and gratify its lusts, and that those things are real evils which are contrary and disagreeable to it: they call light darkness, and darkness light; they call sweet bitter, and

bitter sweet, as the Scripture expresses it. (2.) They pervert our reason, and engage it to favour their pretensions, by numberless plausible arguments which have nothing solid in them. (3.) They fill the imagination with innumerable ideas of vain, idle, dangerous, and sinful objects, and fix them there with inveterate obstinacy, rendering it difficult and painful to fix our thoughts and attention upon spiritual things. (4.) The free will, which naturally follows the light presented to it by the understanding, being thus surrounded by a darkened understanding, a depraved reason, and a sensual imagination, is in a manner irresistibly attracted to those objects which gratify self-love. (5.) All the passions of the soul are engaged to favour self-love, and defend its usurped authority: hope, fear, joy, sorrow, anger, hatred, despair, and the whole train of their attendants, employed by turns in its service, hurry on the soul to commit numberless sins against the law of God, in disregard of all we owe to Him. (6.) The more the soul acts from these impulses of self-love, the more the above evils are increased; the understanding becomes more blind, the reason more perverted, and the will more enslaved; a habit of evil is contracted in all the powers of the soul, and the opposition thus raised to salvation is inconceivable; the sinner even sports with iniquity, loves his delusion, and despises whatever could tend to undeceive him.

3. The Holy Scriptures describe this unhappy corruption of our nature by sin: "This I have found," says Solomon, "that God made man right, and he hath entangled himself with an infinity of questions," Eccles. vii. 30. "All that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life," 1 John, ii. 16. "The wickedness of man is great upon the earth, and all the thought of

their heart is bent upon evil at all times," Gen. vi. 5. "For the imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth," Gen. viii. 21. "They were deceived; for their own malice blinded them, and they knew not the secrets of God, nor hoped for the wages of justice, nor esteemed the honour of holy souls," Wis. ii. 21. "For the bewitching of vanity obscureth good things, and the wandering of concupiscence overturneth the innocent mind," Wis. iv. 12. "When they knew God, they have not glorified Him as God, or given thanks; but became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened," Rom. i. 21. "They walk in the vanity of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts. Who, despairing, have given themselves up to lasciviousness, to the working of all uncleanness, unto covetousness," Eph. iv. 17; but "Woe to you that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter," Isa. v. 20. "Men love darkness rather than light, for their works are evil: for every one that doth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reproved," John, iii. 19. "A fool worketh mischief as it were for sport," Prov. x. 23. "They leave the right way, and walk by dark ways; who are glad when they have done evil, and rejoice when they have done most wicked things," Prov. ii. 13. "If the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots, you also may do well when you have learned evil," Jer. xiii. 23. "The wicked man, when he is come into the depth of sins, contemneth; but ignominy and reproach follow him," Prov. xviii. 3; for "the man that with a stiff neck despiseth him that reproveth him, shall sud-

denly be destroyed, and health shall not follow him," Prov. xxix. 1.

4. To avoid these evils, and overcome the snares that our self-love and its concupiscence lay for our souls, two things are absolutely necessary, and are the arms by which alone we can defend ourselves against its attacks. One is frequent meditation upon the doctrine of Jesus Christ on this subject, Chap. IV., Sects. 1 and 2, to excite in our souls a lively conviction of the vanity of earthly enjoyments, and the misery they bring here and hereafter if we seek our happiness in them. But this alone will not suffice; for though we be persuaded of these truths, yet so long as our hearts are enslaved to the bewitching pleasures of the senses, they will drag us into sin in spite of all we know; and our attachment will never be broken so long as we continue to gratify self-love by indulging its desires. The second thing required is continual self-denial, to deprive our self-love of those things which are agreeable to sensuality and pride, and to force it to undergo things which are unpleasant and humbling, according to the repeated injunctions laid upon us by the Word of God, as we have seen, Chap. IV. And hence we see the goodness of our blessed Saviour in obliging all His followers to deny themselves—to take up their cross and crucify their flesh—as a necessary condition of being His disciples. However disagreeable these things are to nature, yet they are necessary for obtaining eternal happiness. This Jesus Christ knows, and therefore out of love for our souls, and zeal for our eternal happiness, He lays these commands upon us, knowing that, if left to our own choice, we would never have resolution to practise these rigorous virtues.

Q. 2. What is to be observed of the second enemy of our salvation?

A. The second enemy of our salvation is the world, on which we must observe,—1. That by *the world* is understood the great bulk of mankind who live in the captivity and bondage of self-love, blinded by its delusions, slaves to its passions and concupiscences; not only following individually its suggestions, but joining as a body in making open profession of doing so; propagating the false maxims of self-love; praising sensual enjoyments as the only real good; praising riches, honours, and the pleasures of life, as the only things worthy of our notice; esteeming and honouring those who have the greatest abundance of them; despising and undervaluing those who have them not; and turning everything into ridicule which is contrary to their own false opinions. "They are of the world: therefore of the world they speak, and the world heareth them," 1 John, iv. 5. The world, then, is a tumultuous multitude of persons of various characters and tastes, who, rejecting the maxims of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, have no object in view but their own interest; no rule for their conduct but their passions; nothing that interests them but the riches, the pleasures, or the honours of this life. They openly profess themselves enemies of piety and devotion; think themselves at liberty to deride virtue; to ridicule the most venerable practices of piety; to glory in their dissolute conduct, and to boast of irreligion. Among this confused multitude there reigns universal dissimulation, by which they deceive and impose on one another.

2. The Word of God gives us a most dreadful description of this great enemy of souls: "God looked down from heaven on the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, or did seek God. All of them have gone aside; they are become unprofit-

able together; there is none that doth good, no, not one," Ps. lii. 3. "I have seen iniquity and contradiction in the city. Day and night shall iniquity surround it upon its walls, and in the midst thereof are labour and injustice; and usury and deceit have not departed from its streets. . . . Their words are smoother than oil, and the same are darts," Ps. liv. 10, 22. "The sons of men, whose teeth are weapons and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword," Ps. lvi. 5. "Vain are the sons of men; the sons of men are liars in the balances, that by vanity they may together deceive," Ps. lxi. 10. "All that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life; which is not of the Father, but is of the world," 1 John, ii. 16. "We know that we are of God, and the whole world is seated in wickedness," 1 John, v. 19. Jesus Christ, "the True Light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world; He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not," John, i. 9; "Neither does it know God the Father," John, xvii. 25. "The world cannot receive the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth, because it seeth Him not, nor knoweth Him," John, xiv. 17. It hates Jesus Christ and His faithful followers. "If the world hate you," says He, "know that it hath hated Me before you. If you had been of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you," John, xv. 18. "There is a generation," says Solomon, "that are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness; a generation whose eyes are lofty, and their eyelids lifted up on high. A generation, that for teeth hath swords, and grindeth with their jaw-teeth, to devour the needy from off the earth, and the poor from among men,"

Prov. xxx. 12. And David, thanking God for having been protected from them, speaks thus: "Thou hast protected me from the assembly of the malignant; from the multitude of the workers of iniquity. For they have whetted their tongues like a sword; they have bent their bow, a bitter thing, to shoot in secret the undefiled. They shall shoot at him on a sudden, and will not fear; they are resolute in wickedness. They have talked of hiding snares; they have said, Who shall see them?" Ps. lxiii. 3. "They are enemies," says St Paul, "of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction; whose god is their belly; whose glory is in their shame; who mind earthly things," Philip. iii. 18. "Adulterers," says St James, "know you not that the friendship of this world is the enmity of God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God," James, iv. 4.

3. Though this unhappy world, this declared enemy of Jesus Christ and of His cross, usurps an unlimited authority, and exercises a cruel tyranny over the hearts of men, yet it is amazing to see how it is loved and followed, its favour courted, and its frowns dreaded, even by those who pretend to despise it, and are ashamed in their hearts of their base subjection to it. The world promises to its votaries all earthly happiness—riches, pleasures, and honours in abundance — praise, esteem, and favour of men, and everything else that can flatter and gratify self-love; and as our natural attachment to these things is strong and violent, we eagerly adopt its maxims, grasp at its offers, and come into its measures in order to obtain them. On the other hand, it threatens the greatest misery to those who withstand it, pointing them out as objects of contempt; and as there is nothing so wounding to our pride as contempt and

ridicule, so there is nothing which more effectually undermines our virtue, and shakes our best resolutions, than this powerful engine when employed against us. Hence the power which these common expressions have over even the best of people,—"What will the world say? What will men think of us?" Hence the opposition which we meet with to a life of virtue and piety from our own heart, our ready compliance with the ways of the world, and the many excuses which our reason, engaged on the side of self-love, invents and urges to justify this compliance.

4. The Scriptures describe these deluding arts of the world, and tell us how great is its hatred against the servants of God: "The wicked loathe them that are in the right way," Prov. xxix. 27. "He that walketh in the right way and feareth God, is despised by him that goeth by an infamous way," Prov. xiv. 2. "The simplicity of the just man is laughed to scorn," Job, xii. 4. Then it shows us what arts it uses to corrupt the good, and the cause of its hatred against them: "They have said, reasoning with themselves, but not right, The time of our life is short and tedious, and in the end of a man there is no remedy; and no man hath been known to return from hell. For we are all born of nothing, and after this we shall be as if we had never been: for the breath of our nostrils is smoke, and speech a spark to move our heart, which being put out, our body shall be ashes, and our spirit shall be poured abroad as soft air; and our life shall pass away as the trace of a cloud, and shall be dispersed as a mist, which is driven away by the beams of the sun, and overpowered with the heat thereof; and our name in time shall be forgotten, and no man shall have any remembrance of our works. For our time is as the passing of a shadow, and there is no going back of

our end; for it is fast sealed, and no man returneth. Come, therefore, and let us enjoy the good things that are present, and let us speedily use the creatures as in youth. Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments, and let not the flower of the time pass by us. Let us crown ourselves with roses before they be withered; let no meadow escape our riot. Let none of us go without his part in luxury: let us everywhere leave tokens of joy; for this is our portion, and this our lot," Wis. ii. 1. Does not this passage seem intended to describe not only the substance of what the world says, but even the very words it uses to deceive souls? And oh! how many are deluded to their eternal ruin by such allurements! for "evil communications corrupt good manners," 1 Cor. xv. 33. But if the just withstand this assault, see how the world shifts its ground, and attacks them with other weapons! "Let us oppress the poor just man, and not spare the widow, nor honour the ancient grey hairs of the aged. Let our strength be the law of justice, for that which is feeble is found to be nothing worth. Let us therefore lie in wait for the just, because he is not for our turn, and he is contrary to our doings, and upbraideth us with transgressions of the law, and divulgeth against us the sins of our way of life. He boasteth that he hath the knowledge of God, and calleth himself the son of God. He is become a censurer of our thoughts. He is grievous unto us even to behold; for his life is not like other men's, and his ways are very different. We are esteemed by him as triflers, and he abstaineth from our ways as from filthiness. Let us see, then, if his words be true, and let us prove what shall happen to him, and we shall know what his end shall be. . . . Let us examine him by outrages and tortures, that we may know his meekness and try his patience. . . . These things they

thought, and were deceived, for their malice blinded them," Wis. ii. 10. David also describes this conduct of the worldly man, and the fatal success he too often has against good people, in these words: "His mouth is full of cursing, and of bitterness, and of deceit: under his tongue are labour and sorrow. He sitteth in ambush with the rich in private places, that he may kill the innocent. His eyes are upon the poor man: he lieth in wait in secret, like a lion in his den. He lieth in ambush that he may catch the poor man, to catch the poor whilst he draweth him to him. In his net he will bring him down—he will crouch and fall, when he shall have power over the poor," Ps. ix. x. 7.

5. It is manifest that the power of these engines which the world uses to draw us from our duty and the service of God, is owing to our self-love and our slavish attachment to worldly enjoyments; for if we had no attachment to the riches and pleasures of life—if we were truly humble of heart like our Lord and Master—if we were lovers of the cross of Christ, as His servants ought to be,—the world, with all its engines, could make no impression on us; we would despise its deluding promises, and scorn its empty threats. Hence the most effectual remedy against all its snares is to nourish in our hearts a lively faith in the truths of eternity; for "this is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith," 1 John, v. 4; and by the constant exercise of self-denial and mortification, to "take off our affections from things below, and set them on the things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God," Col. iii. 1. And in this we see again with how much reason our blessed Saviour so strictly requires the practice of self-denial from all His followers. Besides, the Scriptures give us several important injunctions on this subject,—(1.) *To*

fly from the world, as far as circumstances permit, and to take no part in its alluring amusements: thus—"My son, if sinners shall entice thee, consent not to them. If they say, Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood, let us hide snares for the innocent without cause; let us swallow him up alive like hell, and whole as one that goeth down into the pit; we shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoils. Cast in thy lot with us; let us all have one purse. My son, walk not thou with them; restrain thy foot from their paths: for their feet run to evil," Prov. i. 10. "Be not delighted in the paths of the wicked, neither let the way of evil men please thee; flee from it, pass not by it, go aside and forsake it," Prov. iv. 24. (2). *Never to court the favour of the world*, nor do the least thing contrary to our duty in order to please it. "Do I speak to please men?" says the apostle St Paul; "if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ," Gal. i. 10. "They have not called upon God; there have they trembled for fear, where there was no fear: for God hath scattered the bones of them that please men: they have been confounded, because God hath despised them," Ps. lii. 6. "Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world: if any man loves the world, the charity of the Father is not in him," 1 John, ii. 15. "Whosoever will be a friend of this world becomes an enemy of God," James, iv. 4. (3.) *Never to fear the world*, nor any of its evils, but to oppose to the base fear of the world the wholesome fear of God. "I say to you, my friends" (these are the words of Jesus Christ to His faithful followers), "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you Whom you shall fear: fear ye Him Who, after He hath killed, hath power to

cast into hell. Yea, I say to you, Fear Him," Luke, xii. 4. And God Himself by His prophet: "Hearken to me," says He, "you that know what is just; My people, who have My law in your heart: fear ye not the reproach of men, and be not afraid of their blasphemies; for the worm shall eat them up as a garment, and the moth shall consume them as wool; but My salvation shall be for ever, and My justice from generation to generation," Isa. li. 7. "And thou, O son of man, fear not, neither be thou afraid of their words; for thou art among unbelievers and destroyers, and thou dwellest with scorpions. Fear not their words, neither be thou dismayed at their looks; for they are a provoking house," Ezek. ii. 6. (4.) *To despise the opinion of the world*, and whatever it may think or say of us, and to study only to please God. "I am not troubled," says Jeremiah to God, "following Thee, my pastor, and I have not desired the day of man; Thou knowest it: that which went out of my lips hath been right in Thy sight," Jer. xvii. 16. "With me," says St Paul, "it is a very small thing to be judged by you, or by man's day; . . . but He that judgeth me is the Lord," 1 Cor. iv. 3. "Woe to you, when men shall bless you; for according to these things did their fathers to the false prophets," Luke, vi. 26. "And the Lord said, Whereunto shall I liken the men of this generation, and to what are they like? They are like to children sitting in the market-place, and speaking one to another, and saying, We have piped to you, and you have not danced; we have mourned, and you have not wept. For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and you say he hath a devil. The Son of Man is come eating and drinking; and you say, Behold a man that is a glutton and a drinker of wine, a friend of publicans and sinners; and wisdom is justified by all her children,"

Luke, vii. 31. So malicious is the world that it will censure and blame whatever one does; and therefore its judgments deserve no regard, being founded in caprice, and not in justice. It is also variable, inconstant, and never to be depended upon. The same world that received Jesus Christ into Jerusalem as a great prophet with hosannas and acclamations, a few days after cried out, *Crucify Him! Crucify Him!* as an infamous malefactor. How unworthy, then, of our regard are the judgments of the world! (5.) *By no means to imitate the world*, nor conform ourselves to its customs and ways. See above, Chap. IV., Sec. 2. (6.) *To glory in standing up for the cause of God*, and even to rejoice in having anything to suffer from the world on that account. "And if also you suffer anything for justice' sake, blessed are ye. And be not afraid of their terror, and be not troubled; but sanctify the Lord Christ in your hearts, being ready always to satisfy every one that asketh you a reason of that hope that is in you," 1 Pet. iii. 14. "Arise," says God to His prophet,—"arise, and speak to them all that I command thee. Be not afraid of their presence, for I will make thee not to be afraid of their countenance," Jer. i. 17.

Q. 3. What is to be observed of the third enemy of our salvation?

A. The third enemy of our salvation is the devil, concerning whom the following particulars are to be known: 1. The account which the Scripture gives of him, his character and dispositions. "Our wrestling," says St Paul, "is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers; against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places," Eph. vi. 12. And in other places of Scripture, the devil, who is the chief of these spirits of

darkness, is called the *prince of this world;* and of him it is said, "There is no power upon earth that can be compared with him, who was made to fear no one. He beholdeth every high thing, and is king over all the children of pride," Job, xli. 24. "By the envy of the devil, death came into the world," Wis. ii. 24; for "he was a murderer from the beginning, and he abode not in the truth, because the truth is not in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of lies," John, viii. 44. He has an implacable hatred to man, and is continually seeking to ruin him: "Behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat," Luke, xxii. 31; for "your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour," 1 Pet. v. 8; and is the cause of innumerable woes to man: "Woe to the earth and to the sea, because the devil is come down to you, having a great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time," Rev. xii. 12. When he gets souls into his power he keeps them captive, and drags them on at his will to all sin," 2 Tim. ii. 26. "You were dead in your offences and sins, wherein, in time past, you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of this air, of the spirit that now worketh on the children of unbelief," Eph. ii. 1.

2. Concerning the nature of his temptations we are told,—(1.) That he blinds the understanding, and makes us forget or not advert to the great truths of eternity: "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of unbelievers, that the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, Who is the image of God, should not shine unto them," 2 Cor. iv. 4. To effect this, he gives them an aversion to hearing the Word of God, according to what our Saviour says to the Jews,—"You are of your

father the devil, and the desire of your father you will do. . . . He that is of God, heareth the words of God; therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God," John, viii. 44, 47. And when at any time they do hear them, "The devil cometh and taketh the word out of their heart, lest believing they should be saved," Luke, viii. 12. (2.) As he was a liar from the beginning, he chiefly makes use of lies and falsehoods to deceive and ensnare us; sometimes by himself, and sometimes by means of wicked men, whom he uses as his apostles. For this purpose, "False apostles," says St Paul, "are deceitful workmen, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ: and no wonder, for Satan frequently transformeth himself into an angel of light," 2 Cor. xi. 13. Sometimes he makes use of the Word of God itself, as he did to Jesus Christ Himself, when He tempted him in the wilderness.—See Luke, iv. 5. Sometimes he deceives by lying signs and wonders, as will be the case chiefly towards the end of the world, when his delusions will be "so great as to deceive, if possible, even the elect," Mat. xxiv. 24; 2 Thess. ii. 9, 10. But we are told, (3.) That the main source of his temptations, and of the fatal weakness which gives him too often the advantage over us, is our self-love, our passions and attachments to the things of this world; and hence his attacks are always pointed at this quarter, by proposing some worldly good to engage our self-love on his side, or threatening some temporal evil to deter us. Thus he attacked our first parents in Paradise, by what was flattering to pride: "You shall be as gods," said he, Gen. iii. 5. He induced David to number his people by vanity: "And Satan rose up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel," 1 Chron. xxi. 1. Through the love of money, "The devil put it into the heart of Judas to betray Christ,"

John, xii. 2. Through the same means "Satan tempted the heart of Ananias and Saphira to lie to the Holy Ghost, and by fraud to keep part of the price of their lands," Acts, v. 3. When he tempted Christ Himself, he attacked Him by the same allurements, first of pleasure, then of vainglory, and lastly of avarice. And indeed it is evident that were it not for our self-love he could have no weapon to attack us, nor would his temptations make any impression on us; for if we neither desired those things which are flattering to self-love, nor feared what is contrary to it, it is plain that neither promises of the one nor threats of the other could ever move us from our duty. We therefore see that the principal defence against all his temptations is to conquer our self-love by continual mortification.

3. But as this is a remedy requiring great courage, the Scripture points out several others which practically assist us in applying it. (1.) *Sobriety* or *Temperance*, by which, if we have not resolution to mortify our self-love entirely, we restrain it at least within the bounds of moderation, and never allow it to drag us to excess. (2.) *Watching*, by keeping a continual guard over our heart to observe the first motion of any temptation, and reject it entirely, never allowing our thoughts to dwell upon it, but doing with it as we would with a spark of fire falling upon our clothes—that is, to shake it off immediately. "Blessed is the man that shall take thy little ones" (*these beginnings of temptations*) "and dash them against the rock," Ps. cxxxvi. 9. By a speedy recourse to the rock, which is Christ—that is, by flying to Him with (3.) *A strong faith and confidence in God*, distrusting ourselves as unable to do any good without Him, and imploring His assistance by humble and fervent prayer; for "God resisteth the proud, but giveth

grace to the humble," James, iv. 6. (4.) *A firm and unwearied resistance* against the enemy, however long his attacks continue, never yielding in the smallest degree to his suggestions, even in the most trifling matters.

4. Of all these remedies the Scripture speaks as follows: "Take unto you the armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of justice, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. In all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take unto you the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God: by all prayer and supplication, praying at all times in the Spirit, and in the same watching with all instance," Eph. vi. 13. "Be subject to God; but resist the devil, and he will fly from you. Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you," James, iv. 7. "Be you humbled, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in the time of visitation; casting all your care upon Him, for He hath care of you. Be sober and watch; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour: whom resist ye, strong in faith," 1 Pet. v. 6. "Watch ye and pray, that ye enter not into temptation," Mat. xxvi. 41. "He that feareth God, neglecteth nothing," Ecclus. vii. 19; for "he that contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little," Ecclus. xix. 1.

Q. 4. Is there anything else to be observed in order to fortify us against the assaults of our spiritual enemies?

A. There is yet another precaution to be observed with the utmost care, because so necessary that the others will be of little service without it; and that is,

carefully to fly from and avoid all the dangerous occasions of sin. On this important subject the following things are to be considered:—

1. By the occasions of sin are meant those circumstances in which a man is exposed to the danger of committing sin. Thus, for example, a tavern is an occasion of sin to a drunkard; insomuch that it will be morally impossible for him to reclaim himself while he frequents it. Gaming, besides its own intrinsic evil, exposes to the danger of anger, cursing and swearing; immodest discourses to impure thoughts and desires; the conversation of unbelievers, to doubts concerning points of faith; reading bad books, to take pleasure in, or consent to, the evil they contain; the company and conversation of those who curse and swear, to speak in the same disgusting manner. Hence these dangerous occasions are called in Scripture language *the evil way*, *the road to sin*, *the way of iniquity;* for as the road or way to any place leads those who walk in it to that place, so these dangerous occasions lead those who walk in them to wickedness and sin. Thus David says, "Remove from me the way of iniquity," Ps. cxviii. 29; "I have restrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep Thy words," ver. 101; "I have hated every way of iniquity," ver. 104: and the wise man, —"Go not," says he, "in the way of ruin, and thou shalt not stumble against the stones," Ecclus. xxxii. 25.

2. How difficult, or rather morally impossible, it is to expose one's self to these dangerous occasions and not be led away by them, is manifest from experience itself; for when a thing is actually present with us, it has much greater power to excite our passions than when absent; and we find it infinitely more difficult to restrain these passions in presence of the object that

excites them than when it is distant from us. A person who is moderately hungry feels the cravings of his appetite, but he can easily bear them; but set some savoury meat before him, and he will scarcely be able to refrain from it. Just so when one is in the dangerous occasion of sin by its presence; it acts so strongly upon the senses, and so excites the sensual appetite, as easily to drag away the will to consent to those sins which it proposes. Suppose a person loses his money in gaming, he is vexed at his misfortune, he condemns his folly, and resolves to renounce that delusive amusement. If he avoid the occasion, he will keep his resolution; but let him frequent the company of those who play, though at first only as a spectator, yet he will soon find his resolution fail: his imagination will flatter him with the hope of better success; the enticements of his companions to try his fortune again will bend him to compliance, or their derision and jeers will unman him. How many instances are there of drunkards who, if kept entirely from liquor, will scarcely think of it; but let them go into company and take a glass or two, and they will not have resolution enough to restrain themselves from excess! A person may be honest, and have even an abhorrence of all injustice; but let him be in difficulties, and have an opportunity of committing fraud with impunity, and who will answer for his honesty? hence the common proverb, that *occasion makes the thief.* How many are there who of themselves would never think of speaking obscene words, yet if in company with those who talk in that strain, are carried away, and speak as they do! From these and many such cases it is plain that the outward occasions of sin are the strongest means which the devil has of tempting us; his internal suggestions are frequently too weak, and of

no effect without the other; and he, well knowing this, does his utmost to lead people into dangerous occasions, and to bring before their eyes the objects that excite to sin as the most effectual way to ruin them. Thus, even with our blessed Saviour Himself, after Satan had in vain tried to deceive Him by other means, "He took Him up into a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and said, all these will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and adore me," Mat. iv. 8. He could easily have told Him in the desert that he had all these kingdoms in his power, and would give them; but he knew that presenting objects before the eyes makes a deeper impression, and excites a more keen desire, than anything that can be said in words. What he did then to Jesus Christ, he continues daily to do to men; and sad experience shows with what fatal success.

3. The sacred Scriptures declare the same truth, and assure us how impossible it is for one to expose himself to these occasions and not be overcome by them. "Can a man hide fire in his bosom," says Solomon, "and his garments not burn? or can he walk upon hot coals, and his feet not be burnt," Prov. vi. 27. "He that toucheth pitch shall be defiled with it; and he that hath fellowship with the proud shall put on pride," Ecclus. xiii. 1. Nay, the same Divine oracles declare, that "he that loveth danger shall perish in it," Ecclus. iii. 27. How strongly is this confirmed by striking examples! Dinah, the daughter of Jacob, passing through the country of Sichem, from curiosity, "went out to see the women of that country," Gen. xxxiv., and she met with dangerous company, lost her honour, and was ravished. David, by looking at a beautiful woman, though at a little distance, was hurried into two grievous

sins, adultery and murder. Solomon with all his wisdom was not proof against the seduction of dangerous company; "He loved many strange women, . . . and his heart was turned away by them to follow strange gods, ... and he worshipped idols," 3 Kings, xi. 1, 4. Sampson with all his strength fell by the same means, and lost both his liberty and life. Eve in her innocence, by listening to insinuating words, was seduced from her duty to commit a grievous sin, which brought ruin and misery on all her posterity; and St Peter, by dangerous company, was induced to deny his Master, and by oaths and imprecations to protest that he did not know Him! How dangerous, then, is it to expose one's self to the occasion of sin! "Evil communications corrupt good manners," 1 Cor. xv. 33.

4. Hence we are commanded in the strongest manner to avoid all such occasions, and to fly from them, both by the law of nature, which strictly obliges every one to avoid exposing himself to the danger of offending God, and of ruining his own soul, and also by the express law of God, both in the Old and New Testament. Thus, when God forbade our first parents to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, He at the same time forbade them so much as to touch it (Gen. iii. 3), lest their touching it should prove an incitement to their eating of it.

So also, when He instituted the days of unleavened bread, He not only forbade His people to eat leavened bread during those days under pain of death, but He would not allow them even to have it in their houses, lest it should prove an occasion of their eating it. "Seven days," says He, "there shall not be found any leaven in your houses; he that shall eat leavened bread, his soul shall perish out of the assembly of Israel," Exod. xii. 19. In like manner Almighty God, well knowing

that the wicked inhabitants of the land of Canaan, if left among His people, would by bad example prove their ruin, prohibited them in the strictest manner from having any communication with them, or even from allowing them to dwell in the land, and thus He speaks: "I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hands, and will drive them out before you; thou shalt not enter into league with them, nor with their gods; let them not dwell in thy land, lest perhaps they make thee sin against Me, if thou serve their gods, which undoubtedly will be a scandal to thee," Exod. xxiii. 31. "Beware thou never join in friendship with the inhabitants of that land, which may be thy ruin; but destroy their altars, break their statues, and cut down their groves. . . . Make no covenant with the men of these countries; lest when they have committed fornication with their gods, and have adored their idols, some one call thee to eat of the things sacrificed," Exod. xxxiv. 12. "Neither shalt thou make marriages with them. Thou shalt not give thy daughter to his son, nor take his daughter for thy son, for she will turn away thy son from following Me. . . . Their graven things thou shalt burn with fire; thou shalt not covet the silver and gold of which they are made, neither shalt thou take to thee anything thereof, lest thou offend, because it is an abomination to the Lord thy God. Neither shalt thou bring anything of the idol into thy house, lest thou become an anathema like it. Thou shalt detest it as dung, and shalt utterly abhor it as uncleanness and filth, because it is an anathema," Deut. vii. 3, 25. "Be not delighted," says Solomon, "in the paths of the wicked; neither let the way of evil men please thee. Flee from it; pass not by it; go aside and forsake it," Prov. iv. 14. In the Gospel, our blessed Saviour is particularly strong on this subject. "If thy

right eye," says He, "cause thee to offend, pluck it out and cast it from thee; for it is better for thee that one of thy members should perish than that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand cause thee to offend, cut it off and cast it from thee; for it is better for thee that one of thy members should perish than that thy whole body should go to hell," Mat. v. 29. Where observe that He does not say, if thy eye or thy hand be an occasion of sin to you, *shut your eye, bind your hand;* but *pluck out thy eye, cut off thy hand.* There is no dallying with these dangerous occasions, nothing but an entire separation can save us from perishing in hell-fire; for "he that loves the danger shall perish in it," Ecclus. iii. 27. See more below, Chap. VII., Q. 25, on avoiding the dangerous occasions of injuring our faith.

5. No man must here trust to the strength of his own resolution, or expose himself to dangerous occasions, from the persuasion that he is firmly determined never to be led astray by them. However strong his resolution may be when at a distance from the occasion, what security can he have that he will not be unmanned when exposed to it? Is he stronger than Sampson, more pious than David, wiser than Solomon, or more faithful than Peter? They fell by being exposed to the occasions; what can he expect? It is the argument of a fool to say, "At present, when I am in no danger, I am fully resolved not to commit the sin; therefore, when in the danger, and when the imagination is heated and the passions excited by its presence, my resolution will persevere in its full strength and vigour." "A wise man," says the Scripture, "feareth and declineth from evil; the fool leapeth over and is confident," Prov. xiv. 16. This self-confidence was the principal cause of St Peter's fall: "Though all should be scandalised in Thee," said

he to his blessed Master, "yet will not I;" and "though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee." He was not then in the occasion; but a little after when exposed to it, how shamefully did his courage fail him! how basely did he deny his Master! Neither let any one say that he trusts in the assistance of God, Who will preserve him; for though we may confidently trust that God will never fail to protect us in those dangers to which we are exposed in the course of duty, or which His Divine providence permits to come in our way, yet we have no reason to expect such protection when we voluntarily expose ourselves to the danger without a cause; nay, such pretended confidence in God is nothing but presumption; it is therefore highly criminal. It is transgressing His express command to fly from the danger, to separate ourselves from it, though as dear as a hand or an eye; and is a provoking of Him to abandon us to ourselves in punishment of our folly. So far is He from promising any assistance in such cases that He expressly declares, "He that loves danger shall perish in it." He does not merely say shall fall, but positively assures us he shall perish in it. Where, then, are the grounds for hoping for assistance when, by exposing ourselves to the danger, we provoke His indignation, and insult Him?

These, then, are the principal remedies against all the enemies of our souls, which, if we faithfully use the Divine assistance, will never be wanting to us; and the more diligent we are in doing our part, the more firmly may we hope for God's protection, and such an abundant supply of His grace as will enable us effectually to keep His holy commandments, and attain eternal salvation. What those duties of His holy law are, we shall now proceed to explain.

Q. 5. Is there any other general observation to be made on the commands before we begin the explanation of each in particular?

A. Any controversial point about the commandments in general, as the possibility of keeping them, the manner of dividing them into two tables, or the like, has been fully examined in the *Sincere Christian.* It remains here only to remember that each command contains two classes of duties—one, the things which we are commanded to practise; the other, those from which we are commanded to abstain. The former are called positive duties, the other negative. The former contains things commanded, the other things forbidden. The things commanded are acts of various virtues; the things forbidden are the opposite vices. Positive duties, or acts of virtue, oblige us to their observance only in those times and circumstances where the law requires them to be performed; negative commands, which enjoin our abstaining from evil, oblige us at all times, and in all circumstances—as it can never be lawful to do anything which the law of God forbids. Thus, though the law commands us to honour our parents, yet this does not require us to be continually employed in actually showing them respect, and honouring them; but the same law forbids us to dishonour them, and this obliges us never at any time, or on any occasion, to show them disrespect or disregard. The same is to be observed in all the other commandments.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.

Q. 1. WHAT is the first commandment?

A. "Thou shalt have no strange gods before Me. Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, nor of those things that are in the waters under the earth: thou shalt not adore them nor serve them: I am the Lord thy God, mighty and jealous," Exod. xx. 3.

Q. 2. What is the general end or purport of this first command?

A. It is to direct us in that supreme worship and adoration which we owe to God, as a Being of infinite perfection, our first beginning, our last end, and our sovereign Lord. This worship consists in believing God to be what He is, and in adhering to Him with all the powers of our soul; and this is done by the virtues of faith, hope, charity, and religion. To honour, adore, or worship God as He deserves, we must,—(1.) Conceive a just idea of His excellency; for to think less of Him than He deserves is to dishonour Him. (2.) We must put a confidence in Him proportionate to His ability and will to help us; for to distrust Him implies a want

of esteem of Him. (3.) We must have an affection and love for Him suitable to His merits; for indifference, and much more aversion, are signs of contempt: and (4.) We must give proof of our esteem and attachment to Him by every suitable external demonstration, and by serving Him. Now as God is a Being of infinite excellency and infinite perfection, we must believe Him to be such, and esteem Him above all things; and this we do by faith. As He is infinitely powerful, and able to assist us in all our needs, has an infinite love for us, and is most desirous of our real good, and at the same time has engaged His fidelity by repeated promises to befriend us, we ought to have an unbounded confidence in Him; and this is the virtue of hope. As He is infinitely beautiful and lovely in Himself, and infinitely good to us, being our first beginning, our last end, our only happiness, on whom we have a total dependence for our very being itself, and for all we have or need, we ought to love Him above all things; and this is Divine charity. Finally, as He is our sovereign Lord, and has the most absolute and unlimited power and dominion over us, we ought to render Him ever possible homage, obedience, and service, both of soul and body; and this we do by the virtue of religion. When these holy virtues are seated in our soul, and produce there the suitable dispositions, we worship and *adore God in spirit;* and when our whole outward behaviour proceeds from, and corresponds with, these inward dispositions of the soul, then we *adore God in truth.*

Q. 3. What, then, is properly enjoined by this first commandment?

A. To worship and adore God alone by faith, hope, charity, and religion. The three first of these virtues—namely, faith, hope, and charity, or love of God—are called

Divine virtues, because they tend immediately to unite the soul with God; and of them the Scripture says, "Ye that fear the Lord, believe Him, and your reward shall not be made void. Ye that fear the Lord, hope in Him, and mercy shall come to you for your delight. Ye that fear the Lord, love Him, and your hearts shall be enlightened," Ecclus. ii. 8.

Q. 4. What is forbidden by the first command?

A. All those vices which are contrary to these virtues.

Section I.

Divine Faith.

Q. 5. What is Divine faith?

A. Faith is a virtue by which we firmly believe God to be what He is, and by which we also believe all those sacred truths which He has revealed to mankind, upon the authority of His Word, and because He has revealed them.

Q. 6. How do we know those truths which God has revealed?

A. By the testimony of His holy Church, which He has appointed to be the depository of these truths, and the infallible guardian and preserver of them, so long as the world shall endure; as we have seen and proved at large in *The Sincere Christian instructed*, Chap. XI.

Q. 7. How do we honour and worship God by faith?

A. Because when we firmly believe all those sacred truths which God has revealed, and taught us by His holy Church, even though we neither see nor comprehend them, but merely because He has revealed them, by this we do homage to His infinite wisdom and veracity, and

prefer His word before our own proud judgment, our senses, our reason, and every other consideration, which we humbly subject to His Divine authority.

Q. 8. Are we strictly obliged to believe whatever God has revealed?

A. Most undoubtedly; both because it would be the highest insult to His infinite wisdom and veracity to refuse belief to what He says, and because He expressly requires this homage from us, and makes our believing in Him by faith a necessary condition of salvation; as we have also seen in the *Sincere Christian*, Chap. X., from repeated testimonies of His Holy Scripture.

Q. 9. But how can we believe what we neither see nor understand?

A. Properly speaking, it is only in things which we neither see nor understand that we do believe; for if we see anything with our eyes, and examine it by our other senses, the knowledge we acquire of it by this means is not faith, but *experience.* If we come to know anything by a train of arguments drawn from known principles, or by comparing the known properties, relations, and connections of things, the knowledge thus acquired is not faith, but *reason* and *demonstration.* Faith or belief, strictly speaking, embraces only the knowledge we acquire of things from the testimony of others, even though we never saw them, or even cannot comprehend *how* or *why* they should be, from want of sufficient information. And if those who give the testimony are persons of knowledge and veracity, we can have no well-grounded difficulty in believing what they affirm, though we neither see nor comprehend what they tell us.

Q. 10. Can this be shown by any examples?

A. Examples of this are every day before our eyes. An ignorant peasant looks to the heavens, and his senses

represent to him the moon about three feet broad, and the stars a great deal less. He speaks of this to a learned man, who tells him that these things are different from what he thinks—that the moon is a large body, many miles broad, and the stars many times larger, still assuring him that this can be demonstrated by strict reasoning, and that the small appearance they present to his eyes is owing to their great distance. On the authority of this learned man the peasant relies, and believes what he says, though contrary to what he himself sees; because he knows him to be a learned and truthful man, who, having studied these things, must know them better than he does, and can have no motive for deceiving him. In like manner, students of all arts and sciences must take many things at first upon their master's word. They believe many things which they neither see nor understand, and have no difficulty in doing so, on the authority of their master who declares them. If this be the case in things of this world, where the testimonies are only those of men, how much more must it be expected in things relating to another world, and where it is God Himself who declares them? The Scriptures say, "Hardly do we guess aright at things that are upon the earth, and with labour do we find the things that are before us. But the things that are in heaven, who shall search?" Wis. ix. 16.

It is plain we can never discover the things that are in heaven, either by reason or experience, and that unless Almighty God condescend to reveal them to us, we must for ever remain ignorant of them. "No man," says Jesus Christ, "knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him," Luke, x. 22. If, therefore, God has been pleased to disclose any of these heavenly truths

to mankind, who can refuse to believe them upon His word, though we do not understand them? For "if we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater," 1 John, v. 9. Can we be surprised that we do not understand spiritual things, when there are many material objects before our eyes every day which we cannot comprehend? Is it a matter of wonder that our finite understandings should not be able to see what belongs to an infinite God, or penetrate into the views and reasons of an all-wise Being? Or shall we weak creatures presume to decide what is possible for our Almighty Creator to do or not to do? Or what is becoming and fitting that His infinite wisdom should do? Hear how the Scriptures confound our pride: "I have seen," says Solomon, "the trouble which God hath given the sons of men to be exercised in it. He hath made all things good in their time, and hath delivered the world to their consideration, so that man cannot find out the work which God hath made from the beginning to the end," Eccles. iii. 10. "And I applied my heart to know wisdom, . . . and I understood that man can find no reason of all those works of God that are done under the sun: and the more he shall labour to seek, so much the less shall he find; yea, though the wise man shall say that he knoweth it, he shall not be able to find it," Eccles. viii. 16, 17.

But to understand this fully we must observe that in any object there are three things to be considered—its existence itself, the manner how it exists, and the reason why it exists. Now it is plain that we may know some one of these things, though perfectly ignorant of the others. We know that wheat sown in the earth grows up, producing an abundant crop; the reason why we also know—namely, to supply food for man; but of the

manner how this is effected we are in total ignorance. We know that certain medicines produce certain effects. The reason why is also manifest—to contribute to the health of man; but the manner how they come to have this effect all the physicians of the world are unable to explain. From time to time comets are seen in the heavens, and from the observations of the learned it appears that they run with immense velocity, and in a course quite different from the other heavenly bodies. That comets exist, we know with certainty; but in what manner they run such a singular course, why they do so, or to what purpose they serve, who can pretend to say? If, therefore, even in things before our eyes, whose existence we see, we are often ignorant both of the why and of the how, is it surprising that we are ignorant of this in things belonging to heaven and to eternity? It is manifest that as we can never know the existence of the things of God but by revelation, much less can we know either the reason why or the manner how they are so, unless He disclose both to us. If, therefore, He is pleased to reveal that certain things are so, without telling us the why or the how, can we have any difficulty in believing God's word because He makes known a part and not the whole? He has revealed that in the Divine nature, which is individually one, there are three really distinct persons. The manner how this is we cannot understand, any more than we know how opium induces sleep; and God has not thought fit to explain the manner of this mystery to us. Shall we refuse, therefore, to believe the fact which He has revealed, because He does not judge proper to explain the manner? This, it is evident, would be the height of extravagance! Now the existence of anything revealed, without knowledge of the manner of its existence, is, properly speaking, the object

of faith; for if we knew the manner of its existence, and saw its intrinsic evidence, this would no longer be faith—it would be belief on demonstration and reason, but not faith. Therefore the whole virtue, the merit of faith, consists in believing that revealed truths are really as revelation teaches, though we cannot see the manner how they are so, even though they seem contrary to our ideas or to our reason, which, being conversant only with created and natural objects, cannot be qualified to judge of the supernatural and the uncreated.

Q. 11. What idea do the Scriptures give of the nature of Divine faith?

A. 1. They tell us plainly that at the present time we know heavenly things darkly and but in part, and therefore must believe many things upon the word of Jesus Christ our Master, not expecting to see them clearly while we are in this world. "We know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away. . . . We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know even as I am known," 1 Cor. xiii. 9. "We have also the more firm prophetical word, whereunto you do well to attend, as to a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts," 2 Pet. i. 19. And therefore in this life "we walk by faith, and not by sight," 2 Cor. v. 7.

2. That "faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not," Heb. xi. 1. "The evidence of things that appear not;" because, though we cannot see with our eyes, or comprehend with our reason, the great truths of eternity, and can know them only by revelation, yet the evidence we have of their existence by means of faith, is such that it

gives us absolute certainty, as great or even greater certainty than the testimony of our senses or reason can afford in things belonging to their sphere; so that, according to St Paul, "things not seen" are the only proper objects of our faith.

3. That all the merit of faith arises from this, that we believe upon the authority of God's word alone what we neither see nor understand. That faith is a virtue most acceptable to God, and will be amply rewarded by Him, is a fundamental article of the Christian religion. "God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but have life everlasting," John, iii. 16. "My sheep," says Jesus Christ, "hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall not perish for ever," John, x. 27. Now what makes faith acceptable to God is precisely this, that we do supreme homage to His infinite veracity by believing what He says, because He says it, though we neither see nor understand it: thus, when St Thomas professed his faith in Christ, upon seeing the marks of the nails in His hands and feet, and the wound in His side, our Saviour replied, "Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed," John, xx. 29. "You shall greatly rejoice," says St Peter, "if now you must be for a little time made sorrowful, that the trial of our faith, much more precious than gold, which is tried by the fire, may be found unto praise, and glory, and honour, at the appearing of Jesus Christ; Whom, having not seen, you love; in Whom also now, though you see Him not, you believe, and believing you shall rejoice with joy unspeakable, and glorified; receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls," 1 Pet. i. 6. Hence we see that

Divine faith is not an act of the understanding alone, which is necessitated to believe any truth demonstrated by its own internal evidence, but it is also an act of the will, therefore free and voluntary, and on that account meritorious before God, through the grace of Christ.

4. That Divine faith is a gift of God which we can never attain by our natural strength alone, without the assistance of God's grace. This our Saviour declares in these words: "No man can come to Me, except the Father, Who hath sent Me, draw him;" not by compulsion, or by laying the free will under any necessity, but by the strong and sweet motions of His heavenly grace; and therefore He adds a little after—"No man can come to Me, unless it be given him by My Father," John, vi. 44, 66. And He pronounces St Peter blessed when he made profession of his faith in Christ, as being the Son of God, because he had received this grace from God. "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father who is in heaven," Mat. xvi. 17. St Paul also declares this truth, saying, "By grace you are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, for it is the gift of God," Eph. ii. 8. And again, "To you it is given for Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake," Phil. i. 29. The reason of this is, that the truths of faith surpass the natural light of our understanding, and many of them even appear contrary to our reason; and although the motives of credibility render them highly credible, yet they are not in themselves evident, but obscure. On this account the understanding finds difficulty in believing them, it being painful to our proud judgment to believe what it cannot comprehend, because this is a tacit acknowledgment of our weakness; and

therefore a free act of the will is necessary to determine the understanding to it. Besides, the will itself is often turned from the truths of faith by the prejudices of education, the spirit of party, worldly interest, human respect, and other obstacles. This renders the difficulties to the understanding still more insuperable; for it must be remembered that though it cannot refuse its assent to truths evident in themselves, or clearly demonstrated by reason, yet in truths which are obscure, and especially if they be above, and in appearance against reason, as supernatural truths generally are, and the proof of their existence drawn only from authority, the will sways the understanding, and influences it either to believe or reject them. It is by means of the above difficulties, both on the part of the understanding and of the will, "that the god of this world," as St Paul expresses it, "blinds the minds of unbelievers, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine unto them," 2 Cor. iv. 4. These difficulties are so many strongholds, in which the pride of the heart of man is fortified, and refuses to submit the idol of its own judgment to Divine authority. Left to itself, it would be more inclined to call in question and to deny the fact of revelation than to believe incomprehensible mysteries. The grace of God, therefore, is necessary to enlighten the understanding, and enable it to pay due attention to those motives, and to show it that there is no real contradiction in the truths proposed by faith, but only an appearance; that they are not contrary to reason, but above it: this grace is also necessary to fortify the will against its prejudices, to incline it to embrace the truths proposed, and to determine the understanding to adhere to them. This St Paul expresses in these words: "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God unto

the pulling down of fortifications, destroying counsels, and every height that extolleth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every understanding to the obedience of Christ," 2 Cor. x. 4. Finally, it is by this grace of God infused into our souls that our faith becomes a supernatural virtue, partakes of the merits of Christ; and our free will, co-operating with this grace, and adorned by it, renders our acts of faith agreeable to God, and meritorious in His sight.

5. That our faith, in order to be pleasing to God, must have these two qualities,—(1.) It must be *firm*—that is, without any doubt of the truth of what it believes, but with an entire assurance and full persuasion that it is infallibly true: and the reason is, because our belief of revealed truths is not grounded upon our senses, on any natural knowledge, or on the testimony of men; but upon the infallible authority of God, Who cannot possibly either be deceived Himself or deceive us. Our understanding, reposing upon this infallible authority of God, receives everything His holy Church proposes, as revealed by Him, with the most undoubted assurance, as being the Word of God Himself, according to that of the apostle, "When you received of us the word of the hearing of God, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is indeed the word of God, Who worketh in you that have believed," 1 Thess. ii. 13. (2.) It must be *entire*, comprehending all revealed truths; for if we refuse to believe any one thing which God has revealed and His Church teaches, we destroy the very foundation of all faith. All the truths of faith stand upon the same foundation, the testimony of God, who reveals them; and if we suppose this testimony false in any one point, we ruin its authority in all. Hence the Scripture says, "He that believeth not the

Son maketh Him a liar, because he believeth not in the testimony which God hath testified of His Son," 1 John, v. 10. We are obliged, therefore, to believe the whole doctrine of Jesus Christ without exception; as we have seen in the *Sincere Christian*, Ch. X., from the repeated testimonies of Holy Scripture.

Q. 12. How can we believe every article which God has revealed, since it is impossible for the great body of mankind to know them all?

A. Our blessed Saviour has fully provided against this difficulty; for having committed all revealed truth to His Church, He gives us the most infallible assurance that "His words put into her mouth shall not depart from her from henceforth and for ever," Isa. lix. 21; but that "His holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, shall abide with her for ever, and teach all truth," John, xiv. 16, and xvi. 13; therefore, whoever actually believes in general whatever the Church of Christ believes, and is ready to receive each article in particular whenever it is proposed to him by her, does, in fact, believe implicitly everything that Christ has revealed, even though he does not explicitly know each particular article. And though there are several articles which every one is obliged to know and believe explicitly, this being the necessary means of salvation, yet the general implicit belief of whatever the Church believes and teaches is sufficient for the others.

Q. 13. What are those articles of faith which each one is obliged to know and believe explicitly, as necessary means of salvation?

A. Some things are so essentially necessary for salvation, that if they be wanting, even without any fault on our part, salvation cannot be attained: others are necessary indeed for salvation, insomuch that if through our

fault they be wanting, we commit a mortal sin, which, without repentance, must deprive us of salvation; yet if they be wanting without any fault on our part, we may be saved without them. The former are necessary as the essential means of salvation by God's appointment, the second are necessary only because commanded. Now of the truths revealed by God, which all are obliged to know and believe expressly, some are necessary as the essential means of salvation, insomuch that without knowing them according to each one's capacity, and believing them, none come to the years of discretion can be saved; others are necessary because we are commanded to know them: so it would be a great sin to be ignorant of them through one's own fault; though if our ignorance was not culpable, we may be saved without expressly knowing them. Of the first kind are these following,—(1.) That *there is a God Who made and rules this world, and that He will reward the good and punish the wicked.* Thus the Scripture expressly says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is a rewarder of them that seek Him," Heb. xi. 6; and the reason is manifest, because if we do not know God, we can neither fear Him, hope in Him, love Him, nor obey Him; without which we can never please Him; and hence St Paul declares that at the last day, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with the angels of His power, in a flame of fire, yielding vengeance to them who know not God, ... who shall suffer eternal punishment in destruction from the face of the Lord, and from the glory of His power," 2 Thess. i. 7. (2.) That *God the Son was made Man, born of the Virgin Mary, died on a cross for our sins, and rose again for our justification* — that is, we must explicitly know Jesus Christ our Saviour, and

what He did to save us. For as He Himself says, "This is life eternal, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent," John, xvii. 3. Hence "man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ," Gal. ii. 16. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved," Acts, iv. 12. "Now he that believeth not is already judged, because he believeth not in the name of the only-begotten Son of God," John, iii. 18; and "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him," John, iii. 36. And Christ Himself declares, "If you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins. They said therefore to Him, Who art Thou? Jesus said to them, The Beginning, Who also speak to you," John, viii. 24. The reason is, because without knowing Jesus Christ we can neither love Him nor follow Him as His disciples, nor obey Him; and the Scripture declares, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema"—that is, accursed—1 Cor. xvi. 22, and that Christ, "being consummated, became the cause of eternal salvation to all that obey Him," Heb. v. 9. And Christ Himself says, "I am the good Shepherd, and I know mine, and mine know Me; . . . My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give them eternal life; and they shall not perish for ever," John, x. 14, 27. (3.) It is also most probable that we are obliged to know distinctly, as a necessary means of salvation, the mystery of *the blessed Trinity;* because this is the principal mystery of our faith, and the great object of our adoration, in the name of which we are baptized by the express command of Christ, and in which we are ordered to be instructed before baptism:

"Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," Mat. xxviii. 19. Besides, how can we know that Jesus Christ is God the Son, and was conceived by the Holy Ghost, unless we know that in God there is the Son, and of course the Father, and the Holy Ghost?

Q. 14. What articles are necessary to be known and believed explicitly, because commanded to be known by all?

A. Our blessed Saviour commissioned His apostles to teach all nations the truths of the Gospel, and the observance of all those things which He had commanded them, Mat. xxviii. And St Paul declares that "those who obey not the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ shall suffer eternal punishment," 2 Thess. i. 8. Now it is manifest that no one can obey the Gospel without knowing it; from whence it follows that every one is obliged by this command to know the Gospel of Christ, at least as much of it as is requisite to enable him to live a good Christian life in that state in which Providence has placed him. Every Christian, therefore, is obliged to know,—(1.) The sense and substance of what is contained in *the Apostles' Creed.* The principal articles of it are concerning God and the incarnation, the knowledge of which is of absolute necessity; the other articles he ought to know in obedience to the above command of Christ, as they are necessary to the being a good Christian (2.) *The Lord's Prayer;* because we are obliged to pray, this being one principal duty of a Christian; and Christ Himself commands us when we pray to use the Lord's Prayer, which He Himself taught us; but it is manifest we cannot obey this command unless we know it. (3.) The *Commands of God and of the Church*, and the *duties of*

one's state of life; because, as obedience to these commands, and the performance of these duties, are necessary conditions of salvation, according to that "if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments," it is plain this condition can never be performed unless we know what our duty is. (4.) The *Sacraments;* at least such of them as one is going to receive—their effects, and the dispositions required on our part for receiving them worthily. Because the sacraments are the great means ordained by God to confer His grace on our souls. Several of these sacraments all are obliged to receive at one time or other, and some of them we are obliged to receive often; and the receiving them worthily, so as to reap benefit and not condemnation, depends upon our dispositions; these, therefore, we ought to know, otherwise we cannot put ourselves into the necessary dispositions. (5.) By the command and custom of the Church, all her children are obliged to know by heart the words of the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, the ten Commandments, the commands of the Church, and how to make the sign of the cross, in the name of the ever-blessed Trinity.

Q. 15. What practical consequences flow from these truths?

A. Several very important ones for different classes of people, and (1.) Those who through their own fault are ignorant of any of these truths of salvation, which they are obliged to know, and through negligence live in habitual ignorance of them, are in a state of sin, and in occasion of committing sin through culpable ignorance of their duty, and the danger of abusing the sacraments if they receive them. (2.) Those are still more guilty who choose a state of life which deprives them of the opportunity of being instructed in what they are

bound to know, showing thereby a positive will not to know it. To these may justly be applied the words of Job, "They say to God, Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways." But they ought to remember what is added of all such. "They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment they go down to hell," Job, xxi. 13, 14. (3.) Parents who neglect to teach their children themselves if they are able, and if not, by sending them to the public instructions of their pastors, and much more if they hinder them on account of worldly affairs, are guilty of a very grievous sin. (4.) God-fathers and god-mothers who neglect to have their spiritual children instructed when their natural parents either neglect or cannot do it, are also guilty in the sight of God. (5.) Masters and mistresses who do not cause their servants to attend the public instructions in the Church, and much more if they hinder them, will find that the ignorance of their servants in the duties of religion will be imputed to them before the tribunal of Christ, in proportion to the share they have had in occasioning it. (6.) Pastors of souls who are strictly obliged to know the great truths of religion more fully and perfectly than their people, not only for themselves, but for instructing others, and who neglect the daily study of these things, spending their time in vain and idle amusements or unprofitable studies, will have a dreadful account to give; for that God who says, "The lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth; because he is the angel of the Lord of hosts," Mal. ii. 7, says also, "Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will reject thee, that thou shalt not do the office of priesthood to Me; and thou hast forgotten the law of the Lord thy God, I also will forget thy children," Osea, iv. 6; and "because you have de-

parted out of the way, and have caused many to stumble at the law, . . . therefore have I made you contemptible and base before all people," Mal. ii. 8. To the same purpose is that of our Saviour to the pastors of His Church: "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt lose its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is good for nothing any more, but to be cast out and to be trodden on by men," Mat. v. 13. (7.) Those who are so gross and dull in their understanding that it is morally impossible for them to learn and retain those truths which we are obliged to know, because commanded, are exempted from that obligation, because they are incapable of satisfying it. But they are obliged to know those other truths concerning God and our Saviour which are necessary means of salvation, because without knowing them they cannot be saved. However, it is sufficient, in order to satisfy this obligation, that they adhere to them by faith when they are explained to them, though they are not capable of retaining them. It is the duty of their pastors to renew this explanation, and assist them to make acts of faith as often as their circumstances may require it, particularly when they are going to receive any sacrament, or are in danger of death.

Section II.

Of Worshipping God by Faith.

Q. 16. How do we actually honour God and worship Him by the virtue of faith?

A. This we do every time that we make acts of faith, whether internally and in private, or outwardly, confessing Him and His Divine truths before men.

Q. 17. What do you mean by an act of faith?

A. It is a profession or protestation made to God that we believe in Him, and in all the sacred truths which He has revealed and His Church teaches, precisely because He has revealed them. Now, concerning the practice of this, several things are to be observed. (1.) That we make these acts of faith either internally in our hearts, keeping our attention fixed upon God, and addressing them to Him as present with us; or we may also express them in words, keeping our hearts attentive to what we are saying. (2.) That these acts may be made either as embracing all revealed truths in general, or may be restricted to one or more in particular. Thus a general act of faith may be expressed in these or similar terms: "O my God, I firmly believe all those sacred truths which Thou hast revealed and Thy holy Church teaches, because Thou, Who art the eternal truth, hast revealed them to her." An act of faith on any particular truth, for example on the blessed Trinity, may be thus expressed: "O my God, I firmly believe that Thou art one God in three distinct persons, because Thou Thyself hast revealed it." (3.) Hence it appears that when we repeat the Creed with suitable devotion and attention, we make an excellent act of faith in the principal mysteries of our religion. (4.) That when we make these acts of faith, either in general or in particular, we honour and worship God, because we make an actual confession and acknowledgment of His supreme veracity; we submit our proud judgments to Him; and prefer His Divine authority to ourselves and to everything else. (5.) That these acts of faith, when frequently repeated with suitable attention and devotion, are of great service to our souls, because they serve greatly to enliven our faith in Divine truths; they give us a feeling sense of the importance of these truths; and when by constant and daily practice

they become habitual to the soul, they give her wonderful strength in time of temptation, and enable her easily "to quench all the fiery darts of the enemy," Ephes. vi. 16, and on this account they are a most excellent preparation for a happy death.

Q. 18. How often ought we to worship God by acts of faith?

A. There are some circumstances wherein it is very necessary to do this; for example, when we come to the sufficient use of reason to know God, and the duty we owe Him as our sovereign Lord, we ought then, in a particular manner, to pay Him this homage of our understanding by acts of faith; so also when one is in any temptation, especially if it be against faith, these acts are the proper arms with which to fight against it. In like manner, when one is going to receive the sacraments, they are a most proper preparation for disposing the soul to receive an ample share of the graces they confer; and when one is in danger of death, it is then most necessary to unite the soul as much as possible with God by acts of faith and other holy virtues. But besides these particular times, it is certainly most advisable to make acts of faith a part of our daily devotion, and of the daily homage we are bound to pay to God, especially when we assist at the public service of the Church; indeed, the oftener we make them the better, considering how much we honour God by them, and how profitable they are to our souls.

Q. 19. Are we obliged to make outward profession of our faith before men?

A. We certainly are, as often as the honour of God or the good of our neighbour's soul requires it. On this important duty we have the following truths laid down in Scripture, — (1.) That the outward confession of

faith is necessary for salvation: "This is the word of faith," says St Paul, "which we preach: that if thou confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thy heart that God hath raised Him up from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart we believe unto justice, but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation," Rom. x. 8. And Christ Himself says, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, I will also confess him before My Father Who is in heaven," Mat. x. 32; Luke, xii. 8. (2.) That to deny Christ before men is a mortal sin which will ruin the soul. Thus Christ declares, "Whosoever shall deny me before men, I will also deny him before My Father, Who is in heaven," Mat. x. 33; Luke, xii. 9. "A faithful saying," says St Paul, "if we be dead with Him, we shall live also with Him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He will also deny us; these things admonish and testify in the Lord," 2 Tim. ii. 11. (3.) And to show us that in all these places the doctrine of Christ is included as well as His person, we are assured that not only if we deny His Gospel or doctrine, but even if we be ashamed of it, He will be ashamed of us at the great day. "Whosoever shall save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and for the Gospel, shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and My words, in this sinful and adulterous generation, the Son of man shall also be ashamed of him, when He shall come in the glory of His Father, with the holy angels," Mark, viii. 35; Luke, ix. 24.

Q. 20. What practical consequences flow from these Scripture principles?

A. From these truths it follows,—(1.) That when a person is called before a judge, or any one in public authority, and questioned about his religion, he is bound in conscience openly to declare it, whatever his doing so may cost, though it be the loss of all he has, or even of life itself: silence or dissimulation in such cases would be a mortal sin; the honour of God, the respect due to religion, the good of his own soul, the edification of his neighbour and confirmation of weak brethren—all combine to require an open confession from him. (2.) That it never can be lawful in any case to deny our faith, even exteriorly, or before men, either by words, signs, or actions; for our blessed Lord declares that whosoever denies Him *before men*, He will deny him before His Father. Such external denial is in itself a falsehood in a matter of the greatest moment, professing externally to reject what one really believes in his heart to be Divine truth. It is dishonourable to God; it is also offensive and scandalous to our neighbour, and must naturally lead him either to think lightly of our holy faith, or to deny it. Hence the Church of Christ has in all ages looked upon it as a most grievous crime, condemned as heretics those who thought it was lawful to deny their faith, and inflicted the severest punishments on those who, even in times of persecution, were guilty of it. Hence the holy martyrs chose rather, as St Paul expresses it, "to endure a great fight of afflictions, and on the one hand, indeed, by reproaches and tribulations to be made a gazing-stock, and, on the other, to become companions of them that were used in such sort: they had compassion on them that were in bands, and took with joy the being stripped of their goods," Heb. x. 32. They suffered death in the midst of cruel torments rather than deny their faith, or even appear to do so. Witness the glorious Eleazar, of whom

we have spoken above, Chap. V., sect. 5, No. 6. (3.) That to be ashamed of our holy faith, or of any part of our Saviour's doctrine, and unwilling to profess or defend it, from fear of the contempt of men or the ridicule of the world, is a grievous insult to Jesus Christ, a betraying of our duty to Him, a preferring of the vain opinion of men to His approbation, and is to be more afraid of man than of God, contrary to His express command; for all which He has declared that He will be ashamed of all such at the great day. [*See this matter fully treated in the 'Sincere Christian,' in the Appendix to the Inquiry, at the end of the second volume.*]

Section III.

The Vices opposite to Faith.

Q. 21. What are the vices opposed to faith, forbidden by the first command?

A. Besides those mentioned above, there are three others which it is necessary to consider here—heresy, voluntary doubts of any revealed truths, and exposing one's self to the danger of losing the faith.

Q. 22. What is understood by *heresy?*

A. To understand this we must observe that Jesus Christ, having revealed to His apostles all those Divine truths of eternity which He thought proper to make known to the world, gave them and their successors, the pastors of His Church, commission and authority to teach them to all mankind, even to the end of time; and as He absolutely requires all men in all ages to believe these truths, under pain of damnation, for "He that believeth not," says He, "shall be condemned,"

Mark, xvi. 16; so He strictly commands all to receive them from His Church, and submit to her decisions concerning them as the only rule by which they can know them: and to remove all difficulty in obeying this command, He has engaged His sacred promise in the most solemn manner so as to assist and direct His Church by His Holy Spirit, that she shall never alter nor corrupt His Divine truths, but shall infallibly continue to teach them to her children pure and undefiled as long as the world shall endure,—all which we have seen in the *Sincere Christian*, Chaps. XI. and XII. Hence the Church of Christ is the only means by which we know what are the truths revealed by Jesus Christ, which we are bound to believe. She is the authority by which alone we know what are the true Scriptures which contain the written word of God, and what is the true sense and interpretation of them. She, therefore, is that sacred and infallible testimony which God has established in this world of Himself and of His Divine truths. Consequently it is the duty of every Christian to receive the truths of faith from the testimony of the Church, with an entire submission of his judgment, and a firm persuasion that her decisions concerning these truths are the dictates of the Holy Ghost, and infallibly true. When, therefore, a person refuses to believe any truth which he knows is declared by the Church of Christ to be a revealed truth, and prefers his own private judgment to her testimony, choosing for himself what to believe, and what not to believe, in opposition to her, this person is a heretic, and the sin he is guilty of by doing so is the sin of *heresy;* for the word heretic, in the original language from which it comes, signifies one that chooses for himself what he thinks fit to believe, in opposition to the sacred rule of faith left to us by Jesus Christ.

Q. 23. Is heresy a grievous sin?

A. It certainly is; and this can easily be shown both from what has been said of the nature of it, and still more from the following considerations:—(1.) It is an insult to Almighty God; for as He has given us His Church as an infallible guide by which to know His Divine truths, and has commanded us to receive them from her, whoever refuses to do so must either suppose God to be false to His promises, or that He commands us to believe a falsehood. He rejects the testimony which God has established of Himself, and makes God a liar. According to that of St John, "He that believeth not the Son makes God a liar, because he believeth not in the testimony which God hath testified of His Son," 1 John, v. 10. (2.) It destroys the very foundation of the Christian religion; for as the Church is the only authority by which we can possibly know with certainty what those truths are which God has revealed, if a man supposes her to have taught false doctrine on one point, as every one does who rejects what she teaches, there can be no security for her teaching truth in any other, and consequently we can never feel certain of any revealed truth, and all Divine faith must be lost. In fact, experience shows this from the example of all who have in any age rejected the infallible authority of the Church of Christ; for however violent and fanatical they may have been for a time, sooner or later they have all fallen into irreligion and deism, rejecting the Christian revelation entirely. Nor is this to be wondered at; for (3.) Heresy destroys all union, the very bond of union among Christians, spreading dissension and discord wherever it goes; for as there are no other means of knowing with certainty what those truths are which Jesus Christ has revealed but by the authority of the Church, when this is once

thrown aside, and every one left to his own fancy, there can be no possibility of preserving unity in the belief of anything; each one has as good a right to follow his own opinion as his neighbour; and all is necessarily reduced to mere fancy and opinion. Hence (4.) the sin of heresy is condemned in the Word of God in the strongest terms, thus: "A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, avoid; knowing that he that is such an one is subverted and sinneth, being condemned by his own judgment," 1 Tit. iii. 10. "Now I beseech you, brethren, to mark them who cause dissensions and offences, contrary to the doctrines which you have learned, and to avoid them; for they that are such serve not our Lord Christ, but their own belly," Rom. xvi. 17. "Though we," says St Paul, "or an angel from heaven, preach a gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema"—that is, accursed; and he repeats it a second time, that it may make the deeper impression, Gal. i. 8, 9. "In the last times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to spirits of error and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy," 1 Tim. iv. 1. "There shall be among you lying teachers, who shall bring in sects of perdition" (or, as the Protestant translation hath it, *damnable heresies*), "and deny the Lord who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction," 2 Peter, ii. 1. St Paul also classes *sects* or *heresies* among the works of the flesh, of which he declares, "that they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God," Gal. v. 27. Our Saviour Himself condemns those that will not hear His Church, as heathens and publicans, Mat. xviii. 17. And St John gives our submission to the pastors of the Church as the distinguishing sign of our belonging to God, and by which to know the spirit of truth from the spirit of

error. "He that knoweth God," says he, "heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us; by this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error," 1 John, iv. 6.

Q. 24. What is to be said of doubts concerning any article of faith?

A. Several things are to be observed concerning them; and (1.) These doubts are sometimes only wandering thoughts that present themselves to the mind, without alleging any reason for doubting, but which discompose the mind in some degree. These are either the effects of the imagination or the suggestions of the devil, and we ought to reject them with contempt, making an act of faith on that very article about which the doubts arise, and begging God's assistance against them if they continue. (2.) Sometimes these doubts are accompanied with false but apparent reasons, which make an impression on the mind. In this case the person must be very careful not to enter into any discussion of these reasons, otherwise he will involve himself in difficulties which may perplex his understanding, because the truths of faith are above all human reason: we know from the revelation of God that *they are true;* but we are too ignorant of all particulars concerning them to be able to comprehend *how they are so;* and if we begin to examine them in themselves, and pretend to satisfy our difficulties by reasons, we will never be able to come to any conclusion. As it is by the testimony of the Church that we know they are revealed by God, and therefore infallibly true, the only certain remedy against these suggestions is to despise them, and to make an act of faith against them, protesting that we believe the truth they oppose, and everything else which the Church teaches, without searching farther into them. (3.) Sometimes difficulties of this

kind arise in the mind, because persons are not sufficiently instructed in what our holy faith teaches: the proper remedy in this case is, to apply to one's pastor, and learn from him what is the doctrine of the Church; and, generally speaking, the full knowledge of that will remove all difficulty. (4.) Sometimes these doubts arise from the company of the enemies of religion, hearing their impious conversation, or reading their books. This, as we shall see shortly, is a sin in those who voluntarily expose themselves to such occasions, of which they ought heartily to repent and crave God's pardon, otherwise they may provoke Him to withdraw His grace in punishment of their presumption, and deprive them of the gift of faith, of which they render themselves unworthy. But (5.) In all these cases their great care should be never to consent to these doubts; for one who knowingly consents to a doubt of any revealed truth is guilty of a great sin—as by doubting he supposes that it is uncertain, and therefore may be false, consequently that God, Who has revealed it, may have told a lie, or that His holy Church may have taught a falsehood, which is certainly an injury to God's infinite veracity; for "heaven and earth shall pass away, but His words shall not pass away." (6.) However, for the comfort of such as are troubled with temptations of this kind, it must be remembered that these thoughts, however long or obstinately they may continue to annoy, cannot injure them without their own consent. If they resist them, abhor false doctrine, cherish a love for the truth, and study to reject all evil suggestions and delusive reasons, these temptations will prove to their advantage, by the victories which they gain over them; they will serve to confirm them more and more in their holy faith; and God will at last crown their fidelity with many

blessings. (7.) Lastly, we may observe that the general remedies for all these temptations of doubt against faith are humble prayer, acts of faith, and discovering the temptation to our pastor, in order to obtain instruction, comfort, and advice. First, *humble prayer;* because, as the devil is the father of lies, so God is truth itself; as the devil is the spirit of darkness, so Jesus Christ is "the light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world," John, i. 9. If, therefore, we desire the light of heaven, and wisdom from above, to dispel the darkness of these diabolical temptations, we must ask it of God by fervent humble prayer: "If any of you want wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all abundantly, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him," James, i. 5. Secondly, *acts of faith*—namely, upon that very mystery about which the doubts arise, with a generous magnanimity protesting one's firm belief of it because revealed by God, and taught by His holy Church, and despising all the suggestions of the devil to the contrary; because every act of this kind confirms the soul in her duty, and is a direct resisting of the attacks of the enemy; and the Scripture commands us to resist him in this manner—"whom resist ye," says St Peter, "strong in faith," 1 Pet. v. 9. And St James assures us that by this means we shall overcome him: "Be subject, therefore, to God, but resist the devil, and he will fly from you," James, iv. 7. Thirdly, *discovering the temptation to our pastor;* for there is nothing the devil is more afraid of than this. When a person conceals any temptation in his own mind, the confusion and trouble which it causes there renders him incapable of discovering the delusions of his spiritual enemy, and makes him fall an easy prey into his hands. But if he opens his mind candidly to his pastor, delusions are

brought to light, advice and instruction are obtained. This discovery the devil hates, and seeks to prevent by suggestions of fear and false shame; but his efforts ought only to render us more careful to have recourse to so salutary a remedy.

Q. 25. What is to be observed concerning exposing one's self to the danger of losing faith?

A. If Jesus Christ has taken the greatest care to give us the utmost security for our faith, and has established the truths which He requires us to believe upon the most solid foundations; the devil, on the other hand, who "goes about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour us," 1 Pet. v., is no less solicitous, wherever he can find an opportunity, to ruin and destroy our faith, or at least to corrupt and weaken it: for this reason, where he knows that his internal temptations of doubt on any revealed truth will not succeed, he attacks us by external instruments, which are—the conversation and books of unbelievers, or those of a false religion. Of these the Scripture gives us the following descriptions: (1.) "Know also this, that in the last days shall come on dangerous times; men shall be lovers of themselves, covetous, haughty, proud, blasphemous; lovers of pleasures more than of God; having an appearance of godliness, but denying the power thereof. Now these avoid; for of this sort are they that creep into houses, and lead captive silly women; . . . now as Jannes and Mambres resisted Moses, so these also resist the truth, men corrupted in mind, reprobate concerning the faith," 2 Tim. iii. 1. Here the apostle describes one of the instruments which the devil makes use of to undermine the faith of Christians, especially those who, either from want of time, ability, or education, are not so fully instructed in the grounds of their religion as to be able to withstand

their attacks; and he tells us they are people of a proud, forward, overbearing disposition, who, being full of themselves, and of their own pretended learning, take every opportunity of railing at the true religion, misrepresenting and calumniating its tenets, and turning the sacred truth it teaches into a subject of laughter and ridicule; sometimes making great pretensions to piety and godliness, but having nothing of the substance, and sometimes, like Satan when he tempted our Saviour, having recourse even to Scripture to suit their purpose. By such conduct, a person who is not thoroughly instructed in the grounds of his religion is apt to be confused and bewildered: doubts arise in his mind, which, if he be not very careful to resist, may expose him to the danger of being led captive by them. (2.) Another kind of instruments the apostle describes as follows: "Now I beseech you, brethren, to mark them who cause dissensions and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have learnt, and to avoid them; for they that are such serve not Christ our Lord, but their own belly, and by pleasing speeches and good words seduce the hearts of the innocent," Rom. xvi. 17. These are quite opposite to the former; people of a calm, winning, flattering behaviour, who point their attacks at the heart and passions, and by smooth speeches and fine promises endeavour to gain the affections of their hearers, the more effectually to seduce them. Learning itself is not proof against these wiles, and there are many examples of the most learned men who have been seduced by them. (3.) A third kind of instrument used by Satan, the same apostle tells us, is the nature of the doctrine of false teachers, which is generally calculated to flatter the pride and passions of the heart, extolling private judgment, and appealing to it, as if the truths of revelation could be examined in

themselves by human reason; calling the sublime and supernatural mysteries of religion to the bar of our limited and imperfect reason; teaching doctrines which are agreeable to flesh and blood, under pretence of Gospel liberty, and rejecting those sacred duties which are a restraint on self-love and human passions. By this means their doctrine becomes pleasing to our corrupt nature—those who learn it, whether from conversation or books, begin to be pleased with it, wish it were true, and then self-love by degrees prevailing, the step is easy to believe it is true. Of this snare the apostle says, "Shun profane and vain babblings, for they grow much towards ungodliness, and their speech spreadeth like a canker, of whom are Hymeneus and Philetus, who have erred from the truth," 2 Tim. ii. 16. Now as the law of nature itself obliges every one to fly from all dangerous occasions of injuring his soul, and the Holy Ghost declares that "he that loveth danger shall perish in it," Ecclus. iii. 27, every one is obliged in conscience to avoid all those dangers above mentioned; and this obligation is confirmed by the express command of the apostle in each of the three texts we have cited. *Avoid them*, says he, and *shun them;* and whosoever shall presumptuously expose himself to these dangers, either by frequenting the company of those above described, or by reading their books, without a just cause or necessity, are guilty of a sin in the sight of God, and expose themselves to the danger of being deprived of the inestimable gift of their holy faith, which they undervalue. From the same reason it is, along with others of equal strength, that all communication in religious exercises with those of a false religion is strictly and repeatedly forbidden in the Holy Scripture and by the Church of Christ, as we have seen at large in the appendix to the inquiry at the

end of the second volume of the *Sincere Christian.* If, however, a person has exposed himself to any of the above dangers, either culpably or in the discharge of his duty, and temptations against faith have arisen in his mind, he ought immediately to have recourse to the three remedies above mentioned, Q. 24, No. VII. See also Chap. VI., Q. 4, on the dangerous occasions of sin.

CHAPTER VIII.

DIVINE HOPE.

SECTION I.

The Nature and Grounds of Hope.

Q. 1. WHAT is Divine hope?

A. It is an ardent desire of salvation, accompanied with a firm confidence and expectation of acquiring it, through the help and assistance of God. Consider each part of this explanation: (1.) It is an ardent desire of salvation, because hope is founded on desire, and presupposes that the one who hopes has a desire of the thing he hopes for. This desire ought to be proportionate to the excellence of the good which is desired; and as our salvation, which is the possession of God Himself, is an infinite good, and infinitely superior to every other good, therefore our desire of it ought to be ardent and strong, and to exceed our desire of every other thing without exception. (2.) This desire must be accompanied with a firm confidence of acquiring it, because desire alone is not hope. A man may ardently desire a thing, and yet despair of obtaining it. As the poor man desires riches, the sick man desires health; and

a person condemned to die desires life, though none of them have any hope of obtaining what they wish. Hence, the desire of any good must be accompanied with a confidence of acquiring it, in order to be hope; so that, though the good be exceeding great, and not easy to be acquired, yet we expect, by using the proper means, at last to obtain it. Thus the merchant desires and hopes to obtain riches by his diligence and industry; the soldier conquest and glory by his courage and bravery; the husbandman a plentiful crop by his labour and toil; and the Christian hopes to acquire eternal salvation, (3.) By the help and assistance of God enabling him to use the means for this purpose. For our holy faith teaches us, that to obtain salvation is far above our own abilities; that by our own natural strength we cannot take the least step towards it; and that our whole dependence must be on God, by whose assistance alone, through the merits of Christ, we can be enabled to acquire it: so that it is from Him we are to expect salvation itself, and the necessary help for obtaining it.

Q. 2. Are we obliged to desire eternal happiness?

A. We are obliged to desire it above all things, which appears, (1.) From the express command—"Seek first the kingdom of God, and His justice," Mat. vi. 33. "If you be risen with Christ, seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God; mind the things that are above, not the things that are on earth," Col. iii. 1. (2.) From the reward promised: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill," Mat. v. 6. "To him that thirsteth I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely," Rev. xxi. 6. (3.) From its being the one thing necessary; for "What will it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Mark, viii. 36. (4.) From the example of

the saints, which see above, Chap. V. 9, 13. No. 3. (5.) From reason itself, which teaches us that we ought to love and desire that most which is most valuable, and most deserves to be loved and desired. This is what we do in worldly affairs. Now eternal happiness is infinitely more valuable than anything else, and therefore deserves to be loved and desired above all things; on which account our Saviour compares it to a pearl of great price, and to a treasure hid in a field, which a man sells all he has to buy.

Q. 3. Are we obliged to hope and trust in God?

A. To hope in God is an essential duty of a Christian, and a principal part of the homage and adoration which we owe to Him; as appears, (1.) From the command repeatedly expressed in the Holy Scriptures, "Have confidence in the Lord with all thy heart, and do not lean upon thy own prudence," Prov. iii. 5. "Offer up the sacrifice of justice, and hope in the Lord," Ps. iv. 6. "Trust in the Lord, and do good; . . . commit thy way to the Lord, and trust in Him, and He will do it," Ps. xxxvi. 3, 5. "Trust in Him, all ye congregation of people—pour out your hearts before Him; God is our helper for ever," Ps. lxi. 9. "Let Israel hope in the Lord, from henceforth, now, and for ever," Ps. cxxx. 3. "Turn thou to thy God, . . . and hope in thy God always," Osee, xii. 6. "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering," Heb. x. 23. "Having the loins of your mind girt up, being sober, trust perfectly in the grace which is offered you in the revelation of Jesus Christ," 1 Pet. i. 13. (2.) From the reward annexed to this duty: "Do not, therefore, lose your confidence," says St Paul, "which hath a great reward," Heb. x. 35. And that reward is the very salvation we hope for; for "We are saved by hope," Rom. viii. 24; and "He that

putteth his trust in me shall inherit the land, and shall possess my holy mount," Isa. lvii. 13. Hence, "Blessed are all they that trust in Him," Ps. ii. 13. "Blessed is the man whose trust is in the name of the Lord," Ps. xxxix. 5. "He that feareth man shall quickly fall; he that trusteth in the Lord shall be set on high," Prov. xxix. 25. "My children, behold the generations of men; and know ye, that no one hath hoped in the Lord and hath been confounded," Ecclus. ii. 11. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and the Lord shall be His confidence; and He shall be as a tree that is planted by the waters, that spreadeth out its roots towards moisture, and it shall not fear when the heat cometh; and the leaves thereof shall be green, and in the time of drought it shall not be solicitous, neither shall it cease at any time to bring forth fruit," Jer. xvii. 7. (3.) From the threats against those who do not hope in God. "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. . . . He shall not see when good shall come, but he shall dwell in dryness in the desert; in a salt land, and not inhabited," Jer. xvii. 5. "The Lord heard, and was angry, and a fire was kindled against Jacob, and wrath came up against Israel; because they believed not in God, and trusted not in His salvation," Ps. lxxvii. 21. (4.) From the examples of the saints: "For thee," says David, "my flesh and my heart hath fainted away: thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever; for, behold, they that go far from thee shall perish—thou hast destroyed all them that are disloyal to thee. But it is good for me to adhere to my God—to put my hope in the Lord God," Ps. lxxii. 26. "Although he should kill me," says Job, "I will trust in Him," Job, xiii. 15. Abraham "against hope believed in hope,

that He might be the father of many nations," Prov. iv. 18. And of good king Ezechias it is said, "He trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel; so that after him there was none like him among all the kings of Judah; nor any of them that were before him. And he stuck to the Lord, . . . wherefore the Lord also was with him," 4 Kings, xviii. 5.

Q. 4. Is it lawful to put any trust in ourselves, or to expect eternal happiness through our own strength and natural abilities?

A. By no means. This would be a grievous sin, an injury to God, to the merits of Jesus Christ, and the utter destruction of Divine hope in the soul; for of ourselves, without the help of God's grace, we can take no step towards salvation. The Scriptures are clear on this point: (1.) "We are not sufficient to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God," 2 Cor. iii. 5; and therefore, "If any man think himself something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself," Gal. vi. 3; for "as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you," says Jesus Christ, "unless you abide in Me; . . . for without Me you can do nothing," John, xv. 4. Nay, we cannot make the least advance towards Jesus Christ unless by God's assistance. "No man," says He, "can come to Me, except the Father, Who hath sent Me, draw Him," John, vi. 44. Much less can we make any progress in His service without Him, for "Neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase," 1 Cor. iii. 7. (2.) If left to ourselves, instead of being able to do any good, we fall into sin and wickedness, because "the wickedness of man is great upon earth, and all the thought of their heart is bent upon evil at all times," Gen. vi. 5; and "The imagination and thought

of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth," Gen. viii. 21. For "the heart is perverse above all things, and unsearchable," Jer. xvii. 9; and "out of it proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies," Mat. xv. 19. See here what man is capable of when left to himself! which is further described by St Paul in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, from examples. (3.) Our strength and ability to do any good is only from God, by the assistance of His grace bestowed on us through the merits of Christ; for "our sufficiency is from God," 2 Cor. iii. 5; and "every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of Lights," James, i. 17. Hence, "it is God who worketh in us both to will and to accomplish, according to His good will," Phil. ii. 13; and our confidence must always be in Him, "that He Who hath begun the good work in us, will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus," Phil. i. 6. But (4.) of ourselves we are altogether unworthy to receive any help from God, both on account of our manifold sins and our abuse of grace; and also, because all we can possibly do, even with the help of His greatest grace, is of no real use to God; but "When we shall have done all things that are commanded us, we must confess that we are unprofitable servants," Luke, xvii. 10. He has no need of us; He is infinitely happy in Himself; nothing that we do can add to His essential happiness. Hence whatever grace or help we need, we must expect not from any merits of our own, but from His infinite mercy alone, Who is free to bestow it on whom He pleases, and therefore says, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; and I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy," Rom. ix. 15. (5.) Hence we see how detestable it must be in the eyes of God proudly to presume upon our own abilities or

merits, and how justly He sets Himself against all such as do so; declaring by His apostle that "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble," James, iv. 6; and "The ancient giants did not obtain pardon of their sins, who were destroyed, trusting to their own strength," Ecclus. xvi. 8.

Q. 5. What, then, are the grounds on which our hope is founded?

A. Sure and solid are the grounds of the hope of a Christian, being no other than some of the most essential perfections of God Himself, through the infinite merits of Jesus Christ;—namely, the infinite power, unbounded goodness, and fidelity of God. (1.) By His Almighty power, we know that He is able to help and save us. Whatever difficulties we may have to encounter, however strong or numerous our enemies may be, yet all this is nothing to the Almighty power of God. Of this see above, Chap. II. (2.) By His infinite goodness we are assured that He is not only willing, but most desirous to help us, and to exert His Almighty power in our favour; that He wills our salvation, and is ready to give us all the necessary helps to enable us to attain it.—See above, Chap. III. (3.) By His fidelity to His word we are assured that He never will fail to bestow every good upon us, and bring us to eternal happiness, if, we be not wanting on our side in fulfilling conditions to which His promises are annexed. "And now, thus saith the Lord, that created thee and formed thee, Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, and called thee by thy name: thou art Mine. When thou shalt pass through the waters, I will be with thee, and the rivers shalt not cover thee; when thou shalt walk in the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, and the flame shall not burn in thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of

Israel, thy Saviour," Isa. xliii. 3. He promiseth pardon of our sins if we repent and turn to Him: "Thou hast prostituted thyself to many lovers; nevertheless, return to Me, saith the Lord, and I will receive thee," Jer. iii. 1. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unjust man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He is bountiful to forgive," Isa. lv. 7. "Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Ezek. xxxiii. 11. He promiseth peace and rest to our souls if we have recourse to Him: "Come to Me, all ye that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you. Take up My yoke and learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls," Mat. xi. 28. He promiseth strength to overcome temptations, and victory if we do our part in resisting them: for "God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able; but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it," 1 Cor. x. 13; and therefore "Resist the devil, and he will fly from you," James, iv. 7. He promiseth all the necessaries of this life if we prefer His service to everything else: "Seek first the kingdom of God, and His justice, and all these things shall be added to you," Mat. vi. 33. He promiseth all good things, whatever may be necessary for us, if we only ask them from Him in a proper manner: "Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you," Mat. vii. 7. In fine, He promiseth eternal salvation if we overcome the enemies of our souls, and continue faithful to Him to the end: "To him that shall overcome I will give to sit with Me on My throne, as I also have overcome, and am set down with My Father on His throne," Rev. iii. 21. "Fear not," says Almighty

God to Abraham, "I am thy protector, and thy reward exceeding great," Gen. xv. 1.

Now, though the above truths are more than enough to establish a firm hope and confidence in God, yet, when we consider our manifold sins and ingratitude for past favours, we are tempted to be discouraged at the sight of our unworthiness. Unworthy we certainly are, and if we had no other merits than our own to depend upon, we could expect nothing but the utmost rigour of justice. But thanks be to God, we have in Jesus Christ, and in what He has done for us, a perfect satisfaction to offer to the justice of God for our sins, and an inexhaustible treasure of infinite merits to supply our deficiencies, and to obtain for us all good! Here we must consider (1.) the greatness of the love of God the Father in giving His Son for us: "God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but have everlasting life," John, iii. 16. Consider here Who gives, what is given; for whom, and for what end: "By this hath the charity of God appeared towards us, because God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we may live by Him. In this is charity; not as though we had loved God, but because He first loved us, and sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins," 1 John, iv. 9. (2.) The greatness of the love of Jesus Christ, in what He did and suffered for us, compared to that of the good shepherd, who, having a hundred sheep, "left the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and went after the one which was lost till he found it," Luke, xv. 4. But with what cost and pains did He seek it?—even so as to lay down His life for it. "I am the Good Shepherd," says He: "the Good Shepherd giveth His life for His sheep," John, x. 11, which was the greatest proof He could give of His love; for "greater

love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends," John, xv. 13. (3.) For whom did Jesus Christ do all this? For sinners: "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost," Luke, xix. 10. "They that are in health," says He, "need not a physician, but they that are ill; . . . for I am not come to call the just, but sinners," Mat. ix. 12. "A faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners," 1 Tim. i. 15. Now, what an immense source of consolation is this to us! St Paul speaks of it with admiration as a motive for hope and confidence in God: "God commendeth His charity towards us; because, when as yet we were sinners, according to the time Christ died for us; much more, therefore, now being justified by His blood, shall we be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by His life," Rom. v. 8; and "He that spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how hath He not also with Him given us all things?" Rom. viii. 32. (4.) For what end did He come? To be all in all to us; to be our mediator of redemption, for "He is the Mediator of the New Testament, that by means of His death for the redemption of those transgressions that were under the former Testament, they that are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance," Heb. ix. 15. To reconcile us with our offended Creator; for "Christ is our peace, and died both for Jews and Gentiles, that He might reconcile both to God in one body by the cross," Eph. ii. 14-16. To be a propitiation for our sins: for "God hath sent forth Jesus Christ to be a propitiation through faith in His blood," Rom. iii. 25. And, "Jesus Christ the just, He is the propitiation for our

sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world," 1 John, ii. 2. For "In Him we have redemption, through His blood, the remission of sins," Eph. i. 7. And He hath "blotted out the handwriting of the decree that was against us, and hath taken the same out of the way, fastening it to the cross," Col. ii. 14. To obtain all good things for us; for God "hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ," Eph. i. 3. And "all things of His Divine power, which appertain to life and godliness, are given us through the knowledge of Him Who hath called us by His Own proper glory and virtue, by Whom He hath given us most great and precious promises, that by these you may be made partakers of the Divine nature," 2 Pet. i. 3. To be our high priest, which, as St Paul justly observes, ought to be a source of hope and confidence: "Seeing, then, that we have a High Priest that hath passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a High Priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, but one tempted in all things like as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, go with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid," Heb. iv. 14. "For that He continueth for ever, hath an everlasting priesthood, whereby He is able also to save for ever them that come to God by Him: always living to make intercession for us," Heb. vii. 24. In fine, Christ came into this world as our master to teach and enlighten us, our guide to conduct us, our guardian to defend us; for He is "the Way, and the Truth, and the Life." He came to supply our wants, to relieve our necessities, to be the source and fountain of grace, blessing, and glory to our souls.

Q. 6. What effects ought these truths to produce in our souls?

A. Chiefly these four. (1.) The solid grounds on which our hope is founded ought to excite in our souls a firm and unreserved trust and confidence; that God will never fail on His part to assist us in our necessities, and bring us at last to eternal happiness. This St Paul beautifully declares in these words: "We desire that every one of you show forth the same carefulness to the accomplishing of hope unto the end: that you become not slothful; . . . for when God made promise to Abraham, because He had no one greater to swear by, He swore by Himself; . . . wherein God, meaning more abundantly to show to the heirs of the promise the immutability of His council, interposed on oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have the strongest comfort, who have fled for refuge, to hold fast the hope set before us, which we have as an anchor to the soul sure and firm, and which entereth in even within the veil," Heb. vi. 11. (2.) That the coming of Jesus Christ into this world, and the ends for which He came, ought to dispel from our hearts all pusillanimity and inordinate fear on account of our own weakness and unworthiness; for if we be weak, His grace is strong: for "I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me," Philip. iv. 13. If our prayers be unworthy, yet, when united with His, and offered in His name, they are sure of acceptance: for "whatsoever you shall ask the Father in My name," says He, "that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son," John, xiv. 13. If our sins be many and grievous, the blood of Jesus is of infinite value, and is a "propitiation, not for our sins only, but for those of the whole world,"

1 John, ii. 2. It is sufficient for those of ten thousand worlds. If we be undeserving of any favour, yet there is no favour which God can give but what Jesus Christ deserves for us. In a word, whatever our miseries be, we have in Jesus a perfect and most effectual remedy; for He "is made to us from God wisdom, and justice, and sanctification, and redemption," 1 Cor. i. 30. For this reason, St Paul is so far from being cast down on account of his own weakness, that he rejoices in it, and thinks himself the stronger the more he feels it and the more he confides in God: "Gladly will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me; therefore I take pleasure in my infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am powerful," 2 Cor. xii. 9. (3.) The sense of our own miseries ought to increase our confidence and trust in God; for the more we see that we have nothing in ourselves to trust to, the more we are led to place our confidence in God, who alone can help us. This sense of our own weakness God so strictly requires of us, that He sometimes permits His most favoured servants to be overwhelmed with tribulations of various kinds, depriving them of all human help and comfort. This He does that all vain confidence may be excluded from their hearts, and their affections wholly turned to Him. Thus St Paul says: "We are pressed out of measure above our strength, so that we were weary even of life: but we had in ourselves the answer of death that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, Who raiseth the dead, Who hath delivered and doth deliver us out of so great dangers; in whom we trust that He will yet also deliver us," 2 Cor. i. 8. Now it is to confidence in God, accompanied with this humble sense of our own weakness and unworthiness, that the

most endearing promises are made. "I am a beggar, and poor," says David, "the Lord is careful of me: Thou art my helper and protector," Ps. xxxix. 18. "Let the poor see and rejoice: seek ye the Lord, and your soul shall live; for the Lord hath heard the poor, and hath not despised His prisoners," Ps. lxviii. 35. "He shall deliver the poor from the mighty, and the needy that hath no helper; He shall spare the poor and the needy, and He shall save the souls of the poor: He shall redeem their souls from usuries and iniquities; and their name shall be honourable in His sight," Ps. lxxi. 12. The more one sees his own misery, and throws himself into the arms of God, the more he pleases and honours God by so doing, and the more God is glorified by delivering him; for, "the Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, and them that hope in His mercy," Ps. cxlvi. 11. . . . (4.) This firm and steady confidence in God ought to be accompanied with a wholesome fear on our part, considering the perversity of our nature and the corruption of our hearts, which incline us so strongly to sin. For though we know for certain that God will not refuse us the necessary graces to perform the conditions to which His infallible promises are annexed, and that He will undoubtedly bring us to eternal happiness if we co-operate with His graces and perform these conditions, persevering in His service to the end; yet we do not know that we will always do so, but have reason to fear lest our perverse heart should fail, and, being deluded by the deceits of the enemy, should abuse the mercy of God, and prevent the accomplishment of His promises. Yet this very fear ought only to make us fly to God with great fervour, and be more assiduous in imploring His assistance. "I fear," says St Paul, "lest, as the

serpent seduced Eve by subtility, so your minds should be corrupted, and fall from the simplicity that is in Christ," 2 Cor. xi. 3. "Wherefore, let him that thinketh himself to stand, take heed lest he fall," 1 Cor. x. 12. And let us always strive "with fear and trembling, to work out our salvation," Philip. ii. 12. "Labouring the more by good works to make our calling and election sure; for doing these things we shall not sin at any time," 2 Pet. i. 10. And it is on the testimony of a good conscience that our confidence must be grounded: "Dearly beloved, if our heart do not reprehend us, we have confidence towards God," 1 John, iii. 21.

Section II.

Of the Advantages we receive from Divine Hope.

Q. 7. Do we reap any particular advantage from hoping in God?

A. Great are the advantages we reap from this virtue; nay, we may justly say, it is one principal source of all blessings from God, and obtains every good thing from Him. True Christian hope contains two parts: distrust in ourselves, and trust in God; an entire diffidence in our own abilities or endeavours, and a perfect confidence in the power, goodness, and mercy of God, and in the merits of Christ. When a soul possesses this true Christian hope in both its parts, there is no favour, grace, or benediction which it will not obtain from God. This His holy word declares:—

(1.) "The Lord shall not delight in the strength of the horse, nor take pleasure in the legs of a man. The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, and in them

that hope in His mercy," Ps. cxlvi. 10. No, the Lord pays no regard to those who trust in themselves, or any creature; but His delight is in those who trust in His mercy: these He favours and protects. The promises He makes to all such are exceedingly endearing, and deserve particular attention. "Because he hath hoped in Me, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he hath known My name. He shall cry to Me, and I will hear him: I am with him in his trouble. I will deliver him, and I will glorify him," Ps. xc. 14. Where, observe, the reason that God promises so many favours is, "because he hath hoped in Me." The same promises are repeated, and the same reason assigned, in several other parts of Scripture. Thus, "The salvation of the just is from the Lord, and He is their protector in the time of trouble. And the Lord will help them and deliver them; and He will rescue them from the wicked, and save them, because they have hoped in Him," Ps. xxxvi. 39. "When my heart was in anguish, Thou hast exalted me on a rock; Thou hast conducted me, for Thou hast been my hope," Ps. lx. 3. "Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me, for my soul trusteth in Thee, and in the shadow of Thy wings will I hope," Ps. lvi. 1. And thus Almighty God Himself comforts Abdemelech when He foretells him that he would see the evil to be brought upon Jerusalem: "And I will deliver thee in that day, saith the Lord, and thou shalt not be given into the hands of the men whom thou fearest: but for a certainty I will deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be saved for thee, because thou hast put thy trust in Me, saith the Lord," Jer. xxxix. 17. From all which it appears that our confidence in God is the price He requires from us for the protection and deliverance we need.

(2.) This is beautifully confirmed by the examples recorded in Scripture of those who had recourse to Jesus Christ for help in their miseries; for we always find, that whatever other pious dispositions they had, their hope and confidence in Him was that to which He attributed the favour they obtained: "Your faith," said He, "hath made you whole," whereby *faith* is properly meant the *belief* they had of His Almighty power, goodness, and mercy, and the confidence which this produced in their hearts. By this our Saviour shows how acceptable it is to Him that we put our whole trust in Him, and how powerfully this inclines Him to show us mercy. Thus, to the man sick of the palsy Jesus said, "Son, be of good heart" (that is, *have confidence*); "thy sins are forgiven thee," Mat. ix. 2. Indeed, in the case of St Mary Magdalen, He first extols her great love, saying to the master of the house, "Many sins are forgiven her, because she has loved much;" but afterwards He told herself, "Thy faith hath made thee safe: go in peace," Luke, vii. 47, 50. What merit do we find in the good thief but the confidence he showed in Jesus Christ, by having recourse to Him as his King, even in the depressed condition in which he then was? And see how it is rewarded! He asked only to be remembered by Him; and Jesus Christ not only assures him of this, but also that he should that day be with Him in paradise.

(3.) The measure of our confidence is even declared to be the measure of the graces we receive; according to what Christ said to the good centurion, "As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee," Mat. viii. 13, to show that if we have strong faith and confidence, we shall receive much; if our faith and confidence be weak, we shall receive little. "All things whatsoever ye shall

ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive," Mat. xxi. 22. Therefore St James declares that when we pray to God we must "ask in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, which is driven and tossed about by the wind; therefore, let not that man think he shall receive anything of the Lord," James, i. 6. And hence holy David says, "Let Thy mercy be upon us, O Lord, as we have hoped in Thee," Ps. xxxii. 22.

(4.) None who put their trust in God are ever confounded, but are sure, sooner or later, to receive the effects of His mercy. "We glory in our tribulations," says St Paul; "knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, trial; and trial, hope; and hope confoundeth not," Rom. v. 3. "My children, behold the generations of men, and know ye that no one hath hoped in the Lord and hath been confounded. For who hath continued in His commandment and hath been forsaken? Or who hath called upon Him, and He despised Him? For God is compassionate and merciful . . . He is a protector to all who seek Him in truth," Eccles. ii. 11. "And thou shalt know that I am the Lord; for they shall not be confounded that wait for Him," Isa. xlix. 23. "And they shall say in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have patiently waited for Him, we shall rejoice and be joyful in His salvation," Isa. xxv. 9. "In Thee, my God, I put my trust, let me not be ashamed; neither let my enemies laugh at me, for none of them that wait on Thee shall be confounded," Ps. xxiv. 2. "In Thee have our fathers hoped: they have hoped, and Thou hast delivered them; they cried to Thee, and they were saved; they trusted in Thee, and were not confounded," Ps. xxi. 5. Thus, when a vast multitude of enemies came suddenly upon Josaphat with a great army, he had

recourse to God, and said, "As for us, we have not strength enough to resist this multitude; but as we know not what to do, we can only turn our eyes to Thee," 2 Chron. xx. 12; and in reward of his confidence he gained an entire victory. When Judith undertook the deliverance of her people, she expressed entire confidence in God alone, saying in her prayer to Him: "Thy power, O Lord, is not in a multitude, nor is Thy pleasure in the strength of horses, nor from the beginning have the proud been acceptable to Thee; but the prayer of the humble and the meek hath always pleased Thee. O God of the heavens, Creator of the waters, and Lord of the whole creation, hear me, a poor wretch, making supplication to Thee, and presuming of Thy mercy," Jud. ix. 16, 17; and the event showed that her hope was not confounded. So also Esther, before she went in to the king to plead for her nation, "prayed to the Lord, the God of Israel, saying, O my Lord, Who alone art our King, help me, a desolate woman, who have no other helper but Thee," Esth. xiv. 3; and in reward of this her confidence in God, she succeeded to her utmost wishes. When Nabuchodonosor threatened the three holy children to throw them into the fiery furnace, and said, "And who is the God that shall deliver you out of my hand?" they replied, with the utmost confidence in their God, "Behold, our God Whom we worship is able to save us from the furnace of burning fire, and deliver us out of thy hands, O king," Dan. iii. 15, 17, and their confidence was wonderfully rewarded. So also the chaste Susannah, in the midst of her false accusers, "weeping, looked up to heaven, for her heart had confidence in the Lord," Dan. xiii. 35, and He delivered her.

Q. 8. What is the reason our hope in God is so amply rewarded?

A. Because by hoping in God we honour Him, showing the strong faith and lively sense we have of His infinite power, goodness, and fidelity, and of the infinite merits of Jesus Christ. We show also how much we esteem and prefer these to every other consideration; and the greater our difficulties are, and the fewer human means we have to depend on, the more we honour God by trusting wholly to Him. Hence the Scripture says, "Neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid: sanctify the Lord of hosts Himself, and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread, and He shall be a sanctification to you," Isa. viii. 12. And again, "call upon me in the day of trouble," says God; "I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me," Ps. xlix. 15. For this reason the hope of Abraham is so greatly commended in Scripture; for Abraham, "against hope, believed in hope, that he might be made the father of many nations. . . . And he was not weak in faith, neither did he consider his own body now dead, whereas he was almost a hundred years old, nor the dead womb of Sarah. In the promise also of God he staggered not, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, most fully knowing that whatsoever He has promised He is able also to perform," Rom. iv. 18.

Q. 9. What other advantages in particular flow from our hope in God?

A. Chiefly these following: (1.) It gives us strength to walk with courage in His service, because we know that with His assistance nothing can be difficult or impossible for us. "If God be for us, who is against us?" Rom. viii. 31; for "I can do all things in Him who strengthened me," Phil. iv. 13. "The eyes of the Lord behold all the earth, and give strength to them that with a perfect heart trust in Him," 2 Paral. xvi. 9. Hence

"none that trust in Him fail in strength," 1 Mac. ii. 61; for "thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, . . . in silence and in hope shall your strength be," Isa. xxx. 15. And therefore "expect the Lord do manfully, and let thy heart take courage, and wait thou for the Lord," Ps. xxvi. 14. The reason is, because God Himself acts for those who hope in Him, and grants them whatever they ask—thus: "Commit thy way to the Lord, and trust in Him, and He will do it," Ps. xxxvi. 5. "Have the faith of God . . . And I say unto you, All things whatsoever you ask when you pray, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come unto you," Mark, xi. 22, 24. What the prophet Isaias says on this is particularly beautiful: "It is God that giveth strength to the weary, and increaseth force and might to them that are not; youths shall faint and labour, and young men shall fall by infirmity: but they that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall take wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not be faint," Isa. xl. 29. Wherefore the Scripture says, "Do manfully, and be of good heart, fear not, nor be ye dismayed, . . . for the Lord thy God, He Himself is thy leader, and will not leave thee, nor forsake thee," Deut. xxxi. 6. "The Lord is good, and giveth strength in the day of trouble; and knoweth them that hope in Him," Nahum, i. 7.

(2.) It gives us the victory over all temptations: "Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they have comforted me," Ps. xxii. 4. "The Lord is my light and salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the protector of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? Whilst the wicked draw near against me to eat my flesh, my enemies that troubled me have themselves been weakened, and have fallen," Ps. xxvi. 1. "For by

Thee I shall be delivered from temptation, and through my God I shall go over a wall," Ps. xvii. 30. "O Lord, Lord, the strength of my salvation; Thou hast overshadowed my head in the day of battle," Ps. cxxxix. 8. And, indeed, all the Psalms are full of this truth. So when St Paul prayed to be delivered from the temptation of the angel of Satan, the Lord bid him be of good courage: "My grace is sufficient for thee; for power is made perfect in infirmity;" that is, the strength and power of God more perfectly shine forth in our weakness and infirmity; because, the weaker we are of ourselves, the more illustrious is His grace in supporting us, and giving us victory under all trials, conflicts, and temptations. On this account the apostle adds, "Gladly, therefore, will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me: . . . for when I am weak, then I am powerful," 2 Cor. xii. 9. Hence, into whatever temptations we may fall, whatever rude assaults our spiritual enemies make against us, we must never lose courage, but trust in God, as He commands us by His holy prophet Moses in these words, "Hear, O Israel; you join in battle this day against your enemies: let not your heart be dismayed, be not afraid, do not give back, fear ye them not; because the Lord God is in the midst of you, and will fight for you against your enemies, to deliver you from danger," Deut. xx. 3.

(3.) It renders the most difficult exercises of a virtuous life easy and agreeable to us. Two things in the Gospel seem at first contradictory. The way to life, we are there told, is narrow, and the gate strait; the practice of virtue is contrary to our inclinations, and declared to be a mortification and denial of ourselves. On the other hand, Christ Himself says in plain terms: "My yoke is easy, and My burden light;" and in other places of

Scripture we are assured that the service of God is easy —that its ways are pleasant, and all its paths peaceful. In the state of innocence, the ways of virtue were all easy and agreeable, because in man there was no desire nor inclination to oppose them—the thoughts and inclinations of his heart all tended towards God, and to whatever was agreeable to Him. Whence, then, arises the difficulty we now experience? Not from virtue itself, which is still the same, but from the corruption of the heart of man by sin. For by sin the dispositions of the heart of man are entirely changed, and turned away from God; his thoughts and inclinations are bent upon evil, and upon those things which are displeasing to God. Hence the difficulty we find in the exercise of virtue, because it is contrary to these our natural but corrupted desires and inclinations; hence the way to life becomes narrow, the gate strait, and the opposition to walk in it strong. Though we have the good will, we find it difficult to accomplish; for "though the spirit be willing, we find the flesh is weak." To assist the good will in this rude battle, and render these difficulties easy, nothing is more efficacious than a firm confidence in the help of God, and a lively faith and hope of the glorious reward which He has promised to those that overcome; for where this is firmly rooted in the heart, it entirely changes the face of things, removes all difficulties, makes the road easy, and even renders pleasant and agreeable the pain and trouble we meet with in the way. This the saints well knew by happy experience; for "By faith Moses, when he was grown up, denied himself to be the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer persecution with the people of God, than to have the pleasure of sin for a time; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasure of the Egyptians: for he looked

unto the reward," Heb. xi. 24. So David says to God—"I have inclined my heart to do Thy justifications for ever, for the reward," Ps. cxviii. 112. So also St Paul suffered the loss of all things with pleasure, "and counted them as dung, that he might gain Christ, pressing on with ardour to the prize of the high calling," Phil. iii. 8. And no wonder, for we see even in worldly things how much the hope of obtaining what we wish for makes us despise all the troubles and difficulties we meet with in pursuit of it. Witness the husbandman, the soldier, the courtier, and others. What all these undergo in their different pursuits is painful and difficult to flesh and blood—contrary to natural inclinations; yet they become not only easy, but pleasant to them, from the hope of what is expected from them. If, therefore, earthly hope has such a powerful effect, how much more must Christian hope animate the soul and sweeten all difficulties in the service of God; especially as those others labour for a corruptible crown, we for an incorruptible one; their hopes are uncertain, ours most assured; their prize, though obtained, can last but for a short time, ours for eternity!

(4.) It sweetens all the afflictions to which we are daily exposed in this valley of tears. In the midst of the miseries, whether of soul or body, by which we are surrounded, the hope of a Christian, the lively sense of that eternal bliss which awaits us in the next life, as the never-ending reward of our sufferings, supports the soul with heroic patience, and fills her with joy and consolation. Our Saviour, after forewarning His followers of the many sufferings they would meet with in this life, adds, "In your patience you shall possess your souls," Luke, xxi. 19. And St Paul tells us that this patience is founded on hope: "Rejoicing in hope, patient in

tribulation," Rom. xii. 12. Our Saviour even exhorts us to rejoice and be glad amidst our sufferings, from the hope of the reward that awaits us: "Rejoice and be glad," says He; "for your reward is very great in heaven," Mat. v. 12. "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us," says St Paul, "so also by Christ doth our comfort abound. . . . That our hope for you may be steadfast; knowing that if you are partakers of the suffering, so shall you be also of the consolation," 2 Cor. i. 5, 7. Nay, he makes this hope a subject of rejoicing: "We glory in the hope of the glory of the Son of God. And not only so, but we glory also in tribulations; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, trial; and trial, hope: and hope confoundeth not," Rom. v. 2. This Divine hope, founded in faith, and enlightened by it, assures us, (1.) That the sufferings of this life will soon end, and be turned into a joy that will remain for ever: "Amen, amen, I say to you, that you shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice, and you shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. . . . You now, indeed, have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you," John, xvi. 20, 22. (2.) That the more we suffer here, the more our consolations in Christ shall abound hereafter. (3.) That all the sufferings of this life are a mere nothing compared to the eternal weight of the glory which shall be revealed in us. See above, Chap. IV. Q. 10.

Section III.

Of the Duties which Divine Hope demands from us.

Q. 10. What are the duties which hope demands of us?

A. They are chiefly these following: I. Frequently to worship God by acts of hope. On which we must observe, (1.) That an act of hope, is a profession or protestation made to God that we do actually put our trust and confidence in Him for all goods in time and for eternity, and particularly for mercy, grace, and salvation, which are the principal things we stand in need of for our souls. (2.) That an act of hope like that of faith, may be made either internally to God present within our hearts, or may be expressed in words: "O Almighty and most merciful God, I put my whole trust in Thee, and firmly hope for mercy, grace, and salvation from Thee, my good God, through Jesus Christ, my Saviour." (3.) That by acts of hope we worship and honour God, because by them we make an actual acknowledgment of our total dependence upon Him, and of the high esteem we have of His power, goodness, and mercy, and of the merits of our blessed Saviour. (4.) That if frequently practised they are of great benefit to our soul, as they serve to enliven our hope in God, and to root that holy virtue deeply in our heart, producing a habit of it in the soul, which is of the utmost advantage in all our trials, difficulties, and dangers, and a most necessary preparation for a happy death. (5.) That, therefore, we ought frequently to honour God by acts of hope, making them part of our daily homage to Him, in the same way as we have

seen above with regard to acts of faith. See Chap. VII. Q. 18.

II. The next duty which hope requires is the fear of God. We are commanded by Jesus Christ Himself to fear God, on account of His almighty power and supreme dominion, by which He can cast both body and soul into hell fire if we offend Him. But this is not the precise light in which we are to consider the fear of God, which Christian hope requires from us; for Christian hope, being founded on an ardent desire of possessing God, our true and only happiness requires that we be afraid of losing this object of our hope, and consequently of doing anything offensive to Him which would expose us to so great an evil. It also makes us careful to do all we can to please Him, the more effectually to secure the happiness of enjoying Him. This wholesome fear arises from a deep sense of our own weakness, the strength of our passions and temptations, the malice of our spiritual enemies, and makes us fly with greater solicitude to the arms of our heavenly Father for help against these dangers. Thus the fear of God both arises from hope and strengthens hope itself, from which it arises; and on this account it is the source of many blessings to the soul. Thus, "He that feareth the Lord shall tremble at nothing, and shall not be afraid, for He is his hope. The soul of him that feareth the Lord is blessed. To whom doth he look? and who is his strength? The eyes of the Lord are upon them that fear Him; He is their powerful protector and strong stay—a defence from the heat, and a cover from the sun at noon; a preservation from stumbling, and a help from falling; He raiseth up the soul, and enlighteneth the eyes, and giveth health, and life, and blessing," Ecclus. xxxiv. 16. "The fear of the Lord is

honour, and glory, and gladness, and a crown of joy. The fear of the Lord shall delight the heart, and shall give joy and gladness, and length of days. With him that feareth the Lord it shall go well to the latter end, and in the day of his death he shall be blessed," Ecclus. i. 11. "The fear of the Lord driveth out sin; for he that is without fear cannot be justified," Ecclus. i. 27. See the whole chapter. "He that feareth God neglecteth nothing," Eccles. vii. 19. And therefore, "Fear God and keep His commandment, for this is all man," Eccles. xii. 13.

III. To avoid sin and keep the commandment of God. The hope we have in God is founded upon His power and goodness, and the effects of these Divine attributes in our behalf are secured to us by His sacred and repeated promises; but we have seen above, Q. 5, that these promises are made with the express condition of our obedience; consequently, our hope will be only a delusion if we live in sin and disfavour with God. Hence the Scripture says, "Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God," 2 Cor. vii. 1. God, indeed, "hath given us great and precious promises, that by these you may be made partakers of the Divine nature; flying the corruption of that concupiscence which is in the world. . . . Wherefore, brethren, labour the more, that by good works you may make your calling and election sure; for doing those things, you shall not sin at any time; for so an entrance will be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," 2 Pet. i. 4, 10. Where it is evident that the promises of God, and consequently our hope which is founded on these promises, necessarily

require on our part a life of innocence and holiness, spent in obedience to the commandments of God. If we perform this duty, our confidence and hope in God will be solid, according to that of the apostle, "Dearly beloved, if our hearts do not reprehend us, we have confidence towards God," 1 John, iii. 21. But if we live wicked lives, and take no care to turn from our evil ways, our hope will only be a pretended hope, mere presumption—an offence to God instead of an honour; for "the expectation of the just is joy, but the hope of the wicked shall perish," Prov. x. 28. "Their hope is vain, and their labour without fruit, and their works unprofitable," Wis. iii. 11. "For the hope of the wicked is as dust, which is blown away with the wind, and as a thin froth which is dispersed by the storm, and as a smoke that is scattered abroad by the wind; and as the remembrance of a guest of one day that passed by," Wis. v. 15. "The hope of the hypocrite shall perish; his folly shall not please him, and his trust shall be like the spider's web," Job, viii. 13. "The eyes of the wicked shall decay, and the way to escape shall fail them, and their hope the abomination of the soul," Job, xi. 20.

IV. To be fervent and constant in the practice of prayer. Prayer is, properly speaking, the exercise of hope, and it is to prayer and a good conscience that those glorious promises are made upon which our hope is founded; for "this is the confidence which we have towards God, that whatsoever we shall ask of Him, according to His will, He heareth us. And we know that He heareth us whatsoever we ask; we know that we have the petitions which we request of Him," 1 John, v. 14. "And if our hearts do not reprehend us, we have confidence towards God; and whatsoever we shall ask,

we shall receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight," 1 John, iii. 21. Hence we see the necessity of prayer; and therefore, if we neglect this duty, it is not surprising that we receive not the good things we stand in need of. We neglect the condition required on our part! "You have not, because you ask not," James, iv. 2. And as prayer is the child of hope, so the more it is accompanied with a firm hope and confidence of being heard, founded in a humble sense of our own weakness and unworthiness, the more efficacious it will be in obtaining all good for us; "for the prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds; and till it come nigh it will not be comforted; and it will not depart till the Most High behold," Ecclus. xxxv. 21. Which Christ Himself declares thus, "I say unto you, All things whatsoever you ask, when you pray, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come unto you," Mark, xi. 24.

Section IV.

Of the Exercise of Hope in our Temporal Affairs.

Q. 11. Is it lawful to hope for the goods of this life, and to ask them of God?

A. Most undoubtedly; because the goods of this life are intended by Almighty God to be helps to our salvation; and if we make a proper use of them, they will conduce to that end. But through the corruption of our nature we are too apt to pervert them to our spiritual ruin. Hence we ought neither to desire nor ask them of God but in as far as He knows they will be condu-

cive to our eternal happiness. At the same time, we ought to have a firm and perfect confidence that God will not fail to bestow them upon us in that measure and degree which He sees most proper for this end. (1.) Because for this He has given His sacred promise, on condition of our laying aside all earthly solicitude, and seeking first the salvation of our souls. "Be not solicitous," says He, "for your life what you shall eat, nor for your body what you shall put on, . . . for your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things. Seek ye, therefore, first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you. Be not therefore solicitous for to-morrow, for the morrow will be solicitous for itself. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof," Mat. vi. 25-32. (2.) Because in the prayer which He taught us, He orders us to pray for the necessaries of life, "Give us this day our daily bread." Now, by the goods of this life are understood, not only food and raiment, but also all other necessaries—success in our temporal affairs, the supply of our wants, support under our crosses, and relief from our afflictions.

Q. 12. Is it our duty to confide and trust in God in all these matters?

A. Most certainly it is our strict duty to do so, although it is much to be lamented that we seldom comply with this duty as we ought; for in our temporal affairs we commonly depend more upon our own efforts, our prudence, talents, riches, or the credit of friends, than upon God. Indeed, men frequently act as if God had no concern in human affairs.

Q. 13. In what manner, then, ought a Christian to confide in God for all these temporal goods?

A. With an unlimited dependence upon and submission to the Divine Providence, and a firm confidence

that God Almighty will bless his lawful endeavours by such measure and proportion of these goods as His Divine wisdom knows to be best for him; and he ought to be perfectly resigned to the will of God when they are withheld.

Q. 14. What is understood here by the *Divine Providence?*

A. By the providence of God is meant His eternal will, by which He regulates and governs all His creatures, according to His own wise ends and purposes. It includes, (1.) His infinite wisdom, by which He knows from eternity everything that ever was, is, or will be in this creation, all things and all creatures, their actions, their thoughts, and everything concerning them; for, "The works of all flesh are before Him, and there is nothing hid from His eyes; He sees from eternity to eternity, and there is nothing wonderful before Him," Ecclus. xxxix. 24. "The eyes of the Lord are far brighter than the sun, beholding round about all the ways of men, and the bottom of the deep, and looking into the hearts of men, into the most secret parts; for all things were known to the Lord God before they were created; so also after they were perfected He beholdeth all things," Ecclus. xxiii. 28. Hence nothing can possibly come to pass but what God knew from eternity, nothing can happen but what is perfectly foreknown to Him. (2.) His Almighty power, which nothing can resist or withstand, and against which nothing can possibly be done. Nay, all ability and power of action comes from God, nor could any creature exist or exert any ability it has without God's preservation and concurrence: "All things are in His power, and there is none that can resist His will," Esther, xiii. 9. "In His hand are both we and our words, and all wisdom and the knowledge and skill of works,"

Wis. vii. 16. "No evil can overcome His wisdom," Wis. vii. 30. "She reacheth, therefore, from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly," Wis. viii. 1. Consequently everything that happens is not only foreknown to Him, but enters into His plan, and is disposed of by His Divine Providence, according to His eternal purposes and views: He disposes the success of all affairs; He raises up one, and puts down another; He makes rich and makes poor; He gives health, and sends sickness. (3.) His absolute dominion over all creatures, by which He rules and governs them, and disposes of everything that comes to pass. Nothing is excepted from His dominion, from the greatest to the least; a sparrow does not fall to the ground but by the disposition of His providence; our very hairs are numbered before Him. Hence "there is no wisdom, there is no prudence, there is no counsel against the Lord," Prov. xxi. 30. "He bringeth to nought the designs of the malignant, so that their hands cannot accomplish what they had begun. He catcheth the wise in their craftiness, and disappointeth the counsel of the wicked," Job, v. 12. (4.) His unbounded goodness towards men, by which He sincerely wills their real happiness with an ardour above anything we can conceive or imagine. For "the Lord is sweet to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works," Ps. cxliv. 9. And "as a father hath compassion on His children, so hath the Lord compassion on them that fear him: for He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust," Ps. cii. 13. Now from this overruling providence of God three grand principles flow, which point out to us in the clearest light what ought to be the tenor of our conduct towards Him, and in what manner we ought to practise an unlimited dependence upon

Him, and a perfect subjection to every disposition of His providence. These principles are:

(1.) That nothing we undertake can succeed, or turn out to our real advantage, without the blessing of God, or against His will. This truth is repeatedly declared to us in the holy Scriptures. Thus, (1.) "There is no wisdom, there is no prudence, there is no counsel against the Lord," Prov. xxi. 30. What was all the worldly wisdom of Herod in his attempt to destroy our new-born Saviour? Or the political steps which Saul took to destroy David? Nay, the Divine Providence often turns the endeavours of worldly wisdom to defeat His views into the very means of promoting them: thus what Joseph's brethren did as the most effectual means to prevent him from becoming their master, was in the hands of God the very thing which made him lord of them all. (2.) "He catcheth the wise in their craftiness, and disappointeth the counsel of the wicked," Job, v. 13; nay, turns even their politics to their own destruction. Witness the accusers of Daniel, and of Susannah, Dan. vi. and xiii. (3.) "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it," Ps. cxxvi. 1. Witness the families of Achab, 4 Kings, x, and of Jereboam, 3 Kings, xiv. (4.) "Except the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it," Ps. cxxvi. 1. Balthassar thought himself secure in his city of Babylon against the Medes and Persians; but he had provoked God to leave him by his sacrilegious banquet, and "the same night he was slain, and Darius the Mede succeeded to the kingdom," Dan. v. (5.) "Neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase," 1 Cor. iii. 7. How many times did God punish His people by famine,

notwithstanding their industry and labour in cultivating their fields? (6.) "All healing is from God," Ecclus. xxxviii. 2, and therefore "It was neither herb nor mollifying plaster that healed them, but Thy word, O Lord, which healeth all things," Wis. xvi. 12. If therefore God says *No*, "In vain dost thou multiply medicines, there shall be no cure for thee," Jer. xlvi. 11. Witness the woman with the issue of blood in the gospel. (7.) "The blessing of the Lord maketh men rich," Prov. x. 22, for "Who is as the Lord our God, . . . lifting up the poor out of the dunghill, that He may place him with princes?" Ps. cxii. 5, 7; and therefore as Lord and Master He says to sinners, "Thy riches and thy treasures I will give to the spoil for nothing," Jer. xv. 13, as in fact He did to Ezekias, Isa. xxxix. (8.) Nothing can save us from dangers without the aid of God; for "the king is not saved by a great army, nor shall the giant be saved by his own great strength; vain is the horse for safety," Ps. xxxii. 16. Saul in the midst of his army fell twice into the hands of David; Goliah the giant was killed by a stripling whom he despised; and Absalom's mule could not carry him from destruction; for "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the learned, nor favour to the skilful," Ecclus. ix. 11; but all these things are disposed according to the pleasure of the Divine Providence. (9.) Finally, "Every plant," says our blessed Saviour, "which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up," Mat. xv. 13. So that it is not only certain that nothing can succeed against the will of God, but even that whatever is not according to His will, whatever does not arise from Him, is not His work, must sooner or later come to destruction, "for he that is not with Me," says Jesus

Christ, "is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me, scattereth," Mat. xii. 30.

(2.) That all the malice of men, all the rage of hell, though combined together against the servants of God, can never touch a hair of their head, nor do them the smallest injury against the will of God, nor go one hair's breadth farther in afflicting them than what God commissions them to do. This is an evident consequence of the idea we have given of the providence of God, and of the preceding principle, and is confirmed by what happened to Job; for Satan dared not touch anything that belonged to him till he was authorised by God; and when he obtained permission to destroy his goods, but not to touch his person, his goods he destroyed indeed, but could not injure a hair of his head till he received a new permission. Nay, when the evil spirits were cast out of the poor man in the gospel, they durst not go even into the herd of swine till they had obtained leave from Jesus Christ, Mark, v. 12, 13. And as to men, who could have a greater desire to injure any one than the Pharisees had to destroy our blessed Saviour? How many snares did they lay for Him? but all to no purpose, till He was pleased to deliver Himself into their hands; for though "they sought to apprehend Him, yet no man laid hands upon Him, because His hour was not yet come," John, vii. 30. See also the example of Herod and Saul, mentioned in the preceding number. And no wonder; for "If God be for us, who is against us?" Rom. viii. 31. Hence the many exhortations to the servants of God in holy writ to have courage and not to be afraid in difficulties and dangers, because God is with them.

(3.) That God will never refuse His servants anything they ask, unless He sees that granting it would be an in-

jury to them, or a hindrance of some greater good; nor will He ever permit any cross or affliction to come upon them, but what He designs and knows to be for their real benefit and advantage. The repeated promises He has made to hear our prayers, and what we have seen above, Q. 10, No. IV., assure us of the first part of what is here said; and the second part is a natural consequence of His infinite goodness and mercy towards His servants; for He certainly has their good infinitely more at heart than they can have themselves, and only He knows what is really good for them; He takes no pleasure in their sufferings as such; for "God made not death, neither hath He pleasure in the destruction of the living, for He created all things that they might be, and He made the nations of the earth for health," Wis. i. 13. Nay, He is touched with pity and compassion at the sufferings of His faithful servants, and sends afflictions upon them only because He knows it is necessary for their good; for this end alone He sends them, and by His all-ruling providence He so tempers and disposes all their trials that they never fail of producing this effect; for "We know," says St Paul, "that to them that love God all things work together unto good; to such as according to His purpose are called to be saints," Rom. viii. 28.

Q. 15. What are the practical consequences that flow from the first of these principles?

A. The first of these principles is, that nothing can succeed without a blessing, or against the will of God. On this sacred truth, the hope and confidence which we ought to have in God teaches us—(1.) That we ought never to undertake nor enter upon any of our affairs without first having recourse to God by fervent and humble prayer, to beg light, direction, and help from

Him. For if nothing can succeed without God, and we expect the necessary help only from Him, surely we ought to use the means for procuring it; and this the Scripture assures us is humble and confiding prayer. "Have confidence in the Lord with all thy heart, and do not lean upon thy own prudence; in all thy ways think on Him and He will direct thy steps; be not wise in thy own conceit, fear God," Prov. iii. 5. "Above all things pray to the Most High that He may direct thy way in truth," Eccl. xxxvii. 19. "Bless God at all times, and desire Him to direct thy ways, and that all thy counsels may abide in Him," Tob. iv. 20. This was the constant practice of all the saints of God. Sensible that they could succeed in nothing without the blessing of Heaven, they had continual recourse to God for His assistance. This we see in Abraham, Moses, and David; and the neglect of this is particularly pointed out in the Scriptures as the cause why Joshua was deceived by the Gabaonites; he was deceived by appearances, and "consulted not the mouth of the Lord," Jos. ix. 14. Does not the universal neglect of this in human affairs show us the radical cause of many misfortunes that happen in the world?

(2.) That in prosecuting our affairs we must never use any means that are sinful and displeasing to God, whatever prospect of success they may give us, but only such as are innocent and lawful. This is a necessary consequence of the same principle; for if nothing can possibly succeed without the help of God, how can we expect His help by doing what is offensive and provoking to Him? On the contrary, "Wo to them that are faint-hearted, who believe not God, and therefore shall not be protected by Him; wo to them that have lost patience, and that have forsaken the right ways, and have gone aside into crooked ways. And what will they do when the Lord shall begin

to examine?" Ecclus. ii 15. Consider the examples of the saints. God ordained that Joseph was to be raised to the highest dignity in Egypt, next the king, and that even his own brethren should be subject to him. This Joseph knew; God had foretold it by His dreams. In the mean time Joseph is sold, and carried as a slave into Egypt. There his master's wife falls in love with him, and entices him to accept her favour. What would worldly wisdom have thought of this? It would have considered it as an occasion for Joseph to make his fortune: his master was high in favour at court; by complying with the desires of his mistress he secured her friendship; and by means of her interest with her husband what might he not expect? But Joseph rejected with horror her wicked proposal, and said, "How can I do this wicked thing and sin against my God?" Gen. xxxix. 9. Susannah was threatened with the greatest of human evils—infamy, disgrace, and a cruel death; and the only human means she had to avoid this was by consenting to the unlawful desires of the two elders; but she rejected the criminal proposal, and chose rather to expose herself to these evils, trusting in God, than to use such unlawful means to avoid them. "It is better for me," said she to them, "to fall into your hands without doing it, than to sin in the sight of the Lord," Dan. xiii. 23. When David was pursued by Saul, who sought to kill him two different times, Saul fell into David's hands, so that he could have killed him, and made way for himself to the crown. He was even exhorted by some of his officers, according to the views of human prudence, to do so. But though David knew he was to succeed to Saul in the kingdom, God having foretold him, yet he would on no account do an unlawful action to bring about that event, but left the accomplishment of it entirely to Divine Pro-

vidence. See 1 Sam. xxiv. and xxvi. Do we act in this manner? What shall we say of those who cheat, lie, and swear falsely in order to gain riches? who spread calumnies and falsehoods against their rivals to depress them? who commit impurities before marriage to secure a husband? who consult fortune-tellers, or use charms and other superstitions, for some worldly views? Have such as these any trust in God?

(3.) That if success attends our endeavours, we ought to give the praise to God, and render Him our sincerest thanks. This naturally follows from the same principle; for if the success be owing to the blessing of God, it is doubtless just that all the praise and thanks should be given to Him; this is what He expects and demands. "In all things give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you all," 1 Thess. v. 18. And "all whatsoever you do in word or work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him," Colos. iii. 17. This also was the practice of the saints, and many of the Psalms of David were composed for this purpose. Is this the practice of the world? When anything goes according to our wishes, do we immediately give thanks and praise to God? Alas! we applaud ourselves; we are pleased with our own conduct; we speak to others of what we think our prudent behaviour; we show our actions in the most favourable light; but as to attributing our success to God, or giving praise and glory to Him, who ever seriously thinks of it? and what is this but a proof that we had no confidence in Him, and trusted only to ourselves, and to our own prudence?

Q. 16. What practical consequences flow from the second principle?

A. The second principle is, That neither the malice of

men nor the rage of devils can do the smallest injury to those who serve God, beyond what He permits. From this it follows, (1.) That whatever dangers we encounter in doing our duty, whatever difficulties or opposition we may meet with, we ought never to lose courage, be cast down, or afflicted. These ought rather to increase our hope and confidence in God, leading us to have recourse to Him with greater fervour, knowing that He is able to assist us against all opposition, and that He will never abandon those that trust in Him. See above, Q. 9, No. 1. David saw the danger and difficulty he had to encounter in combating Goliah. The king sought to deter him from attempting it; but his trust was in God, and he said to Goliah, "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield, but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, which thou hast defied this day, and the Lord will deliver thee into my hands," 1 Sam. xvii. 45. Josaphat saw the danger he was in from the multitude of enemies that came suddenly against him, threatening him and his people with immediate destruction; and "he betook himself wholly to pray to the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast to all Juda," 2 Chron. xx. 3. In his prayer he expressed his total confidence in God, saying, "As we know not what to do, we can only turn our eyes to Thee," ver. 12. And immediately the Spirit of the Lord came upon one of the prophets, and he said, "Fear ye not, and be not dismayed at this multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's. . . . It shall not be you that shall fight, but only stand with confidence, and you shall see the help of the Lord over you," ver. 15, 17. And accordingly God gave His people a miraculous victory over all that multitude. The courage of Judas Maccabeus seemed to increase with the numbers of his

enemies; indeed, he and his people took the most effectual means to secure the Divine protection; they had recourse to God. "They fasted that day, and put on haircloth, and put ashes on their heads, and they rent their garments," 1 Mac. iii. 47; and prayed to God with the greatest fervour. And when his small army came in sight of their enemies, and saw their numbers and their strength, "Judas said to the men that were with him, Fear ye not their multitude, neither be afraid of their assault. Remember in what manner our fathers were saved in the Red Sea. . . . And now let us cry to heaven, and the Lord will have mercy on us, . . . and will destroy this army before our face this day," 1 Mac. iv. 8. And accordingly he gained a most complete victory. Upon another similar occasion Judas encouraged his people in this manner: "They trust in their weapons and in their boldness, but we trust in the Almighty Lord, Who at a beck can utterly destroy both them that come against us and the whole world," 2 Mac. viii. 18. Tobias also gave this noble advice to his son: "Fear not, my son; we lead indeed a poor life, but we shall have many good things if we fear God and depart from all sin, and do that which is good," Tob. iv. 23; and the event fully justified his expectation.

(2.) That in all such cases we ought never to do the smallest thing that can displease God in order to avoid any danger, or to extricate ourselves from any difficulty; but, with an entire confidence in God, continue to do our duty, firmly trusting in Him, that He will order all for the best. Thus Daniel would not omit his prayer three times a-day to God, though he knew that by praying he would be thrown into the den of lions, Dan. vi. The three holy children would on no account worship the golden statue of Nabuchodonosor, though they knew

that for refusing they would be thrown into the fiery furnace, Dan. iii. And Tobias, in his blindness and poverty, would not partake of stolen goods, though to keep himself from starving. "Take heed," says he to his wife, "lest perhaps it be stolen: restore ye it to its owner, for it is not lawful for us either to eat or to touch anything that cometh by theft," Tob. ii. 21. In all these examples God rewarded their confidence abundantly.

(3.) That we ought to receive all the trials that come upon us as sent from God Himself, whoever may be the immediate cause or occasion of them; no creature can touch a hair of our head against the will of God. So whatever befalls us, it is His will that we suffer it. He wills no man to sin, and only permits the sin of those who afflict His servants unjustly; yet He expressly wills the effect of their sin, and the suffering it occasions to His servants. Thus Job referred all his afflictions to God, and blessed Him for them. Eli, David, and Christ Himself, considered all their severe trials as the cup presented to them by their heavenly Father; and receiving them from His holy providence, considered those who occasioned them only as instruments in His hand for executing His will. Thus they bore them with patience and resignation, confiding in His fatherly compassion, believing that all was for their real advantage and benefit.

Q. 17. What practical consequences flow from the third principle?

A. The third principle is, That God will never refuse His servants what they ask, unless He knows it would prove injurious to them; nor allow any trial to come upon them, but what He intends for their greater good. The full conviction of this truth is a source of infinite joy and happiness to a truly pious soul that sincerely

confides in God : for from this it follows, (1.) That such a soul is never in trouble of mind, nor solicitous about the success of his temporal affairs ; he does his duty; he uses the lawful means which Providence puts into his hands, because he knows it is the will of God he should do so ; but having done this, he commits the result to the fatherly protection of God, in whose hands he knows all events are; he relies with confidence on the words of Jesus Christ, "Be not solicitous what you shall eat, or what you shall drink, or wherewithal you shall be clothed; your Father knows that you have need of these things;" and he is firmly persuaded that the result will be what God sees best for him. Thus Elias, persecuted by an impious queen, and obliged to fly into the wilderness, where he had neither meat, drink, nor house to dwell in, laid himself down to sleep under a juniper-tree with as much composure as if he had been in an apartment in the king's palace, 3 Kings, xix. 5.

(2.) If things turn out according to his wishes, the true servant of God is not puffed up with vain joy and self-complacency, as if the success were owing to his own industry, but, referring all to the will of God, he gives thanks and praise to Him alone ; rejoicing more in the accomplishment of His holy will than in the success of his own affairs.

(3.) If things go contrary to his worldly advantage ; if trials and afflictions come upon him, if he is reduced to poverty, oppressed with sickness, loaded with calumny, abandoned by friends, whatever befalls him, the faithful servant of God, who has a true hope and confidence in Him, is unmoved ; he refers all to God, receives all from His hand, and being firmly persuaded that all is for his greater good, says with holy Job, "Although He should kill me, I will trust in Him," Job, xiii. 15. This

is to have true confidence in God! But where shall we find this among men?

Section V.

Of the Sins against Hope.

Q. 18. What are the sins against hope?

A. The sins that are directly against hope, are despair and presumption.

Q. 19. What is despair?

A. Despair is a distrust of obtaining eternal happiness, or the helps necessary for procuring it. It is a very dangerous sin, as it precludes every remedy, anticipates one's own condemnation, and leads to all sin. For if a person once despairs of his salvation, and looks upon it as a thing impossible, he will naturally cease every effort to obtain it. Haunted by the dreadful thought of being lost, he will perhaps commit suicide, as Judas did; or he will abandon himself to sensual vices in order to divert his mind from that thought, and to live pleasantly for the present, as did those of whom St Paul says, that "despairing, they have given themselves up to lasciviousness, to the working of all uncleanness unto covetousness," Eph. iv. 19. It is therefore of its own nature a grievous sin, because it directly attacks all the Divine perfections, and the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, upon which our hope is founded. When the people of Israel in the wilderness despaired of their temporal wants being supplied, we see how this excited the Divine anger against them. "They spoke ill of God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? . . . Therefore the Lord heard,

and was angry; and a fire was kindled against Jacob, and wrath came up against Israel, because they believed not in God, and trusted not in His salvation; . . . as yet their meat was in their mouth, and the wrath of God came upon them, and He slew the fat ones among them, and brought down the chosen men of Israel," Ps. lxxvii. 19, 30. Now if this was the case with those who despaired of temporal favours, how much more offensive must it be when one despairs of his salvation? What greatly increases the injury done to God by despair is, that it shows a want of gratitude for past favours; and this is what God particularly complains of in His people: "How often did they provoke Him in the desert? . . . And they turned their back and tempted God, and grieved the Holy One of Israel; they remembered not His hand in the day that He redeemed them from the hand of him that afflicted them; how He wrought His signs in Egypt," &c., Ps. lxxvii. 40. "Our fathers understood not Thy wonders in Egypt, they remembered not the multitude of Thy mercies, and they provoked to wrath," Ps. cv. 7. How much more offensive must it be to God when a Christian despairs of his salvation, considering the great and wonderful things He has already done to save him and bring him to eternal happiness? See above, Q. 5, Chap. V.

Q. 20. Who are they that are guilty of despair?

A. (1.) Those who give up all hope of salvation, and look upon themselves as of the number of the reprobate. (2.) Those who on account of the number and grievousness of their sins reject the hope of pardon. Such as do this insult the mercy of God and the merits of Christ; they imitate Cain, who said, "My iniquity is greater than that I may deserve pardon," Gen. iv. 13. They imitate Judas, whose perdition was not so much owing to his

crime in betraying his Master, which might have been pardoned had he repented, as to his despair, which closed the door to mercy, and plunged him into final impenitence. (3.) Those who, from experience of their own weakness, evil inclinations, and bad habits, cease their efforts to correct their faults, and give rein to their passions. Thus when God exhorted the Jews to return from their evil ways, "They said, We have no hopes; for we will go after our own thoughts, and we will do every one according to the perverseness of his evil heart," Jer. xviii. 12. All such feelings are highly injurious to the power of God, to the grace of Jesus Christ, and His sacred promises. (4.) Those who, in time of sickness or adversity, have no hope of support from God, and therefore wish for death, do anything to procure it, or use unlawful means for relief, such as charms or superstitions; as Saul did when, despairing of help from God, he applied to the witch of Endor. (5.) Those who, being in worldly difficulties, distrust the providence of God, and have recourse only to human means, neglecting their souls through their solicitude; contrary to the express orders of our Saviour, "Be not solicitous for the body . . . but seek first the kingdom of heaven." (6.) Those who, if what they ask in prayer be not granted immediately, give up all hope of obtaining it, and, even though it be for the good of their soul, cease to pray for it; forgetting that perseverance is one of the principal conditions of efficacious prayer, and that God often defers granting what we ask, that by our perseverance we may obtain it at a more proper time, and with more advantage.

Q. 21. What are the remedies against despair?

A. (1.) To imprint in our souls a deep sense of the power, goodness, and fidelity of God, and of the infinite

merits of Jesus Christ, by frequent meditation on them, on the great advantages of hope in God, and the many encouragements we have in Scripture to trust in Him. (2.) To have recourse to God by fervent prayer, that He may strengthen us in hope. "Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself," says St Paul, "and God and our Father, Who hath loved us, hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope in grace," 2 Thess. ii. 15. And therefore he prays "that the God of hope may fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, and in the power of the Holy Ghost," Rom. xv. 13. (3.) To accustom ourselves to make frequent acts of hope and confidence in God, by which that virtue will be daily more and more firmly rooted in our souls.

Q. 22. What is presumption?

A. It is a vain and rash expectation of eternal happiness, and of the means necessary to obtain it, without performing on our part the conditions which God requires; either as if we had a title to it in ourselves, or had it always in our own power to use the necessary means of acquiring it when we pleased. This also is a grievous sin of its own nature; it is reckoned one of the sins against the Holy Ghost, because it abuses His goodness, is an encouragement to sin with greater boldness, and generally leads to despair at the hour of death.

Q. 23. Who are they that are guilty of presumption?

A. (1.) Those who continue to live in their sins in the vain hope that they will repent before they die, that they will have time afterwards, that God will not suffer them to be lost, because He is merciful. See '*Sincere Christian*,' Ch. XXIV. Q. 28. To which add this advice of the wise man: "Say not, I have sinned, and what harm hath befallen me? for the Most High is a patient rewarder. . . . Say not, The mercy of the Lord is

great, He will have mercy on the multitude of my sins. For mercy and wrath quickly come from Him, and His wrath looketh upon sinners. Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day. For His wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance He will destroy thee," Ecclus. v. 4. See also above, Q. 10., No. III. (2.) Those who flatter themselves that because they practise some good works, say some prayers, or give alms, they will obtain salvation, though they do not repent, do not perform penance for the sins they have contracted the habit of committing, nor take the necessary care to amend; not reflecting that to such as these in a particular manner the Scripture says, "Despisest thou the riches of His goodness, and patience, and long-suffering? Knowest thou not that the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance? But according to the hardness and impenitent heart, thou treasurest up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the just judgment of God," Rom. ii. 4. "For he that offends in one point becomes guilty of all," James, ii. 10. (3.) Those who rely upon their own strength, endeavours, and resolutions to conquer their passions, overcome temptations, and acquire virtue, and neglect to ask the Divine assistance by which alone they can succeed. This was the fault of St Peter, when he said to Christ, "Though all men should be scandalised at Thee, I will never be scandalised. . . . Though I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee," Mat. xxvi. 33. This presumption is often punished by our being abandoned to ourselves, and left to fall into some humiliating sin to convince us of our folly, and teach us our weakness and misery, as was St Peter's case. (4.) Those who, living in the dangerous occasion of sin, will not abandon it,

from the vain hope that, being now so firmly resolved, they will never more be overcome. This case is near akin to the former, and generally ends in the same disgrace. See above, Chap. VI. Q. 4. (5.) Those who in worldly affairs trust more in their own prudence, judgment, riches, friends, and other human means, than in God. "Put not your trust in princes," says the royal prophet, "in the children of men, in whom there is no salvation: his spirit shall go forth, and he shall return into his earth; in that day all their thoughts shall perish. Blessed is he who hath the God of Jacob for his helper, whose hope is in the Lord his God, Who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all things that are in them," Ps. cxlv. 2. "Woe to them who go down to Egypt for help, trusting in horses, and putting their confidence in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are strong, and have not trusted in the Holy One of Israel, and have not sought after the Lord," Isa. xxxi. 1. And therefore "charge the rich of this world not to be high-minded, nor to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, Who giveth us abundantly all things to enjoy," 1 Tim. vi. 17. See above, Q. 3. No. III. Of King Asa it is observed, after he had sought help from the Syrians, and was reproved for it, that when he fell ill, yet in his illness he did not seek the Lord, but rather trusted in the skill of physicians, 2 Paral. xvi. 12. "Remember Moses, the servant of the Lord, who overcame Amalek that trusted in his own strength, and in his power, and in his army, and in his shields, and in his chariots, and in his horsemen, not by fighting with the sword, but by holy prayers," Judith, iv. 12.

Q. 24. What are the remedies against presumption?

A. (1.) It is evident that presumption is the result of pride, and therefore the great remedy against it is humil-

ity, and a just sense of our weakness and misery, of the vanity of earthly things, of the supreme power and dominion of God over all creatures, and of His holy providence; all which can only be acquired by frequent and serious meditation. (2.) Serious reflection on the danger of delaying conversion, and of exposing one's self to the occasion of sin; and on the examples of those who have lost themselves by these means. (3.) Continual prayer to God for true humility and hope in Him. See above, Q. 4, and particularly Q. 10, No. III.

CHAPTER IX.

CHARITY, OR THE LOVE OF GOD.

SECTION I.

The Nature and Grounds of Charity.

Q. 1. WHAT is charity?

A. Charity is a Divine virtue infused into our souls, by which we love God above all things, and our neighbours as ourselves, for God's sake. *It is a Divine virtue;* for "charity is of God, . . . and God is charity; and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him," 1 John, iv. 7, 16. So that charity unites us immediately with God. *It is infused into our souls;* "because the charity of God is poured abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, Who is given to us," Rom. v. 5. By it *we love God above all things;* for "if any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him," 1 John, ii. 15. By it *we love our neighbour for God's sake;* for "If God hath so loved us, we also ought to love one another; . . . if we love one another, God abideth in us, and His charity is perfected in us; . . . and this commandment we have from God, that he who loveth God, love also his brother," 1 John, iv. 11, 12, 21. By this it also appears that charity is a love of friendship between God and the soul, by which they

are united together, and abide in one another; St Peter calls it being "made partaker of the Divine nature," 2 Pet. i. 4. And our Saviour says, "If any one love Me, My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and will make Our abode with him," John, xiv. 23. Of this friendship with our soul Jesus Christ is most desirous, and says, "Behold, I stand at the gate and knock: if any man shall hear My voice and open to Me the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me," Rev. iii. 20.

Q. 2. Are we obliged to love God with this love of charity?

A. We are most strictly obliged to this; because charity is a means of salvation so absolutely necessary that it is impossible for us either to obtain pardon of our sins or enter into heaven without it. The pardon of our sins is nothing else than the pouring down of this holy charity into our souls, by which the guilt of sin is washed away, and we are restored to the friendship of God. It is the marriage garment which adorns the soul, and without which it is impossible to gain admittance into the marriage chamber, Mat. xxii. 12. Hence St Paul assures us that without this nothing can be of any avail to us. "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels," says he, "and have not charity, I am become as a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy, and should know all mysteries, and all knowledge; and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing," 1 Cor. xiii. 1. "For he that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is charity," 1 John, iv. 8; and "if any

man loveth not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema," 1 Cor. xvi. 22—that is, accursed.

Q. 3. What are the motives or grounds upon which our obligation to love God is founded?

A. The first and principal motive for the love of God is the infinite excellency of His nature, His infinite beauty and perfections, which render Him worthy of all possible love from us and all creatures. He has, therefore, in Himself a supreme right to our love, because *He is what He is;* the most beautiful, the most excellent of beings, in comparison of whom all creatures are a mere nothing. Faith and hope are grounded upon some particular perfections of God, but charity embraces them all, considers God as infinitely lovely in all Divine perfections, and says to Him with the spouse in the Canticles, "Thou art all lovely, O my beloved." See what we have said at large upon this subject, Chap. V. This is the most excellent motive for loving God; and a love of God, founded on it, is the perfection of Divine charity. This is what every one who wishes well to his own soul ought to endeavour to procure.

The second motive of the love of God is His goodness, in the numberless benefits He has bestowed and is daily bestowing upon us, and in what He has prepared for us in His kingdom. On this subject see Chap. III. This lays us under the strictest obligation of making Him a return of gratitude and love proportionate, as far as our weakness will permit, to His love for us.

The third motive of the love of God is, that this love is the very end of our being. As He is our first beginning, so He is our last end; we are created for no other purpose than to love and serve Him; and our essential happiness depends on our doing so, insomuch that if we do not comply with this duty, we shall be

for ever separated from Him, and be eternally miserable.

The fourth motive is His supreme dominion over us, and over all creatures, see above, Chap. XI. This gives Him absolute right to lay upon us what commands He pleases, and with the whole weight of His Divine authority He commands us to love Him, as the first and greatest of all our duties.

Q. 4. How is the command of loving God expressed?

A. It is expressed in these terms: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength. And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thy heart; and thou shalt tell them to thy children, and thou shalt meditate upon them sitting in thy house, and walking on thy journey, sleeping and rising: and thou shalt bind them as a sign on thy hand, and they shall be and move between thy eyes; and thou shalt write them in the entry, and on the doors of thy house," Deut. vi. 4. Our Saviour confirms this in the Gospel, adding that we ought to love God with our whole mind, and declares that "this is the greatest and first commandment," Mat. xxii. 38. Now in these words the universality and plenitude of that love which we owe to God is laid down in the strongest terms; and it is evident that God requires the whole man to be employed in His love and service; for He not only commands us to love Him with all our different powers, but with the whole of each; He will be the only object of our love, so that we can love no creature for itself along with God, without depriving Him of what is His. The whole which He claims to Himself admits of no division; so that we are not allowed to love ourselves, or any creature, but in God, for God, and

with subordination to our love for Him. The perfection of this love will be attained only in heaven; but here we are bound to endeavour to approach to it as near as we can, as will appear more fully by considering the duties which the love of God requires.

Section II.

Of the Duties which the Love of God demands from us.

Q. 5. What are the duties which charity, or the love of God, demands from us?

A. Principally these following: (1.) That we prefer God in our mind and heart to everything else without exception. We must not only believe that God is infinitely preferable to everything else, but we must actually give Him this preference in our affections upon all occasions. We must place our supreme happiness in Him, so as to be willing and ready actually to part with everything, and, as St Paul expresses it, to "suffer the loss of all things" rather than to lose Him by sin; and our attachment to Him must be so firm, that no creature, nor any temporal consideration, shall be able to separate us from Him. We naturally prefer health and life to everything else in this world; and in consequence of this preference, we willingly part with ease, riches, and even any of our members, in order to preserve life and health. In like manner we must so prefer God to everything else, as willingly to part with all, when this is necessary for preserving His love and friendship. "Love is strong as death," says the spouse in the Canticle. "Many waters cannot quench charity, neither can the floods drown it:

if a man should give all the substance of his house for love, he shall despise it as nothing," Song of Solomon, viii. 6. Now this love of preference is what all are obliged to have for God, as absolutely necessary for salvation; for if there be any creature which we love more than God, so as to be willing in the disposition of our heart to commit a mortal sin rather than part with it, or in fact do actually commit such a sin on its account, we can never, while so disposed, see the face of God in mercy. "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me," Mat. x. 37. "Every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be My disciple," Luke, xiv. 33. Examples of this love of preference for God we find in the saints. Such was the love of Abraham, who for love of God not only left "his country and his kindred and his father's house," Gen. xii. 1, but was ready to sacrifice his son, his only, his beloved son Isaac, in order to please God, Gen. xxii. Such was the love of St Paul, who "suffered the loss of all things, and counted them as dung that he might gain Christ," Philip. iii. 8. Such was the love of the apostles, who "left all and followed Christ." And so strong was their love of God, that they could all say with St Paul, "Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword? . . . for I am sure that neither life nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord," Rom. viii. 35. Such also ought to be the dispositions of every Christian. And in requiring this God requires nothing more than what is

just and right; for does not reason itself demand that we should love, esteem, and give preference to everything according to its real worth and value? Seeing therefore that God is infinitely more excellent in Himself and more beneficent to us than all creatures whatsoever, it is certainly just and right that we should love and prefer Him to them. Besides, as He is our Creator, our Lord and God, He has a perfect right to demand what belongs to Him as such. Do not kings expect to be honoured by their subjects? Do not parents and masters of families desire to be honoured by their children and servants? And is it not most just that God should require to be honoured as God? Now, what is it to honour Him as God, but to love and prefer Him to everything else? Nay, He could not, consistently with His own sanctity, do otherwise; for as among men, if a king should allow any other to be honoured as a king, this would be to make that other person king; so if God should allow us to love and esteem any creature as Himself, this would be supposing that creature to be as worthy as He is; which is contrary to truth, and would be allowing us to honour a creature as God, which is idolatry. This love of preference is properly what is meant by loving God "with our whole heart and with our whole mind;" for when we have just sentiments of the infinite excellence of God, and esteem Him above all things, we love Him with our whole mind; and when we in our heart do actually prefer Him to all creatures, and are ready to part with everything rather than lose Him, we love Him with our whole heart as the law commands.

(2.) The second duty which charity demands from us is, that we make it our continual endeavour to obey the commandments of God, and to do His will to the utmost of our power. This is a natural consequence of the

former duty; for if we prefer God and His friendship to everything else, this must make us attentive to study in everything to do His holy will. Besides, love, when sincere, naturally excites in the heart a fear of offending and a desire of pleasing the one we love; as we see in friends, or in children who have a love and affection for their parents. This fear of offending and desire of pleasing the objects of our love, makes us exceedingly anxious to do whatever is agreeable to their will and inclination, insomuch that the smallest indication of their wishes is sufficient to engage our attention, and to lead us to obey them. If, therefore, our love of God be real and sincere, it cannot fail to make us diligent in doing what is pleasing to Him, and in obeying His holy commandments; so that in demanding this obedience as a proof of our love, God asks only what is a natural consequence of true love wherever it exists. And this is what is meant by loving God with "our whole soul;" that is, with all the powers and faculties of our soul, when they are all employed in serving and obeying Him. Hence we find that love and obedience are joined together in Scripture as inseparable, and both equally demanded of us: "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but that thou fear the Lord thy God, and walk in His ways, and serve and love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with all thy soul, and keep the commandments of the Lord?" Deut. x. 12. With our whole heart we properly love Him, and with the powers and faculties of our souls we serve Him and keep His commandments. Hence our Saviour requires this obedience as the substantial proof of our love. "If you love Me," says He, "keep My commandments. . . . He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me," John, xiv. 15, 21. "If any one love Me,

he will keep My word. . . . He that loveth Me not, keepeth not My word," John, xiv. 23, 24. And the beloved disciple adds, "He that keepth His word, in him in very deed the charity of God is perfected," 1 John, ii. 5. "For this is charity, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not heavy," 1 John, v. 3. They are not heavy, indeed, to one that truly loves God, for love makes them not only easy but delightful. None surely ever had such a love for God as Jesus Christ had for His eternal Father. And how did He show it? "I came down from heaven," says He, "not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me," John, vi. 38. "I seek not My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me," John, v. 30. "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and that I may perfect His work," John, iv. 34. "I do always the things that please Him," John, viii. 29. And hence He says to His disciples, "If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love, as I also have kept My Father's commandments, and do abide in His love," John, xv. 10. This, therefore, is an essential quality of our love of God, and a most convincing proof of its sincerity. Without this, little regard is to be had to warm affections of the heart, or tears of sensible devotion when we think of God and holy things, for these may arise from other causes than a real love for God; but though one should have none of these sensible affections, if he be steady and constant in keeping the commands of God, he gives solid proof that he sincerely loves Him. But that this obedience may be perfect, we must not be content with barely doing what God commands, we must add to this another duty which His love requires, and that is—

(3.) That we refer all to His honour and glory; that

is, not only our obedience to His express commands, but that everything else be done with a view to please Him; that we reject all desire of pleasing ourselves, of gaining the esteem or favour of men, and that our daily aim and intention be to please God and glorify Him. God has a full right to everything we do; for as we are by nature His servants, we are obliged to act for Him continually; as He is our creator and preserver, He has a full title that everything be done for Him; as He is our last end, we ought to tend towards Him by everything, and refer all to Him. Has not the gardener a full right to everything that grows in his garden, and the husbandman to all the produce of his field? All we have and are, our soul and body, our senses, powers, faculties, and members, belong essentially to God; they are all His indisputable property—He has the most absolute dominion over them; consequently He has an indisputable right to everything we do by them. This duty is strongly enjoined in Scripture. St Paul prays for his Ephesians "that they may be rooted and founded in charity," Eph. iii. 17; that is, that charity or the love of God may be the root or foundation of everything we do, as he expresses it in another place, saying, "Let all your things be done in charity," 1 Cor. xvi. 14; and still more clearly in the following words, "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever else you do, do all to the glory of God," 1 Cor. x. 31. Again, "All whatsoever you do, in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him," Col. iii. 17. And our Lord Jesus, who, as we have seen, was so assiduous in doing His Father's will, was no less attentive in doing all with a pure intention for His Father's glory. "I seek not My own glory," says He; "if I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing," John, viii.

50, 54. This pure intention of doing all for the glory of God and to please Him is so necessary that our best actions, if done from any other motive, will be of no avail before God. Christ Himself assures us that, if we give alms, fast, or pray to be seen by men, we need expect no reward from God, Mat. vi. 1; but that the least good we do, were it only to give a cup of cold water, if done for His sake, shall not fail to be rewarded, Mat. x. 42.

(4.) Another duty which charity demands from us is, that we cheerfully submit to the will of God in suffering as well as in acting. We must be ready to suffer all the crosses and difficulties we may meet with in His service, and to undergo every kind of torment, even death itself, rather than offend Him by sin. This is a natural consequence of the former duties of charity, for in obeying His commands and serving Him many crosses and difficulties will be met with, because "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," 2 Tim. iii. 12; and "through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God," Acts, xiv. 21. If we prefer God to everything, we must be ready to sacrifice our ease and satisfaction, and to suffer all the evils of life as well as to lose its goods, rather than lose God. Hence our Saviour makes this an essential condition of being His disciple: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up His cross daily, and follow Me;" and "whoever does not take up his cross and follow Me, is not worthy of Me." To suffer cheerfully in the service of one we love, or for his sake, is a natural consequence of sincere love. What toils and sufferings do not parents undergo for their children, soldiers for their prince, a wife for her husband in sickness, &c.?

Nay, love makes all such sufferings even pleasant and agreeable; and if this be the case in natural love, much more must it be in Divine charity; hence the apostles rejoiced to be counted worthy of suffering ignominy for Christ's sake. St Paul superabounded with joy in all his tribulations, and gloried in nothing but in the cross of Christ; the holy martyrs received death in all its terrors with joy, for the love of their heavenly Master; and indeed this is the greatest proof of the sincerity of our love to God, that we lay down our life for His sake; for "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends," John, xv. 13. And this is to love God "with all our strength," when all our strength is exerted in bearing the afflictions of this life, and carrying our cross for His sake.

5. Lastly, Divine charity requires that we should actually honour and worship God by acts of His holy love; on which we must observe, (1.) That an act of the love of God is a declaration or protestation made to God that we actually love Him above all things, because He is what He is; and it may be done in the following or similar terms, either mentally addressed to God, or pronounced in words: "O gracious and good God, I love Thee above all things, because Thou art infinitely good in Thyself, and infinitely good to me. I desire to love Thee with all my heart, and soul, and mind, and strength; and for love of Thee I am ready to part with everything rather than to lose Thee, my God, by sin." (2.) That in making acts of this kind we be careful that the heart and will accompany the words we pronounce, otherwise we shall be like those of whom the Scripture says, "They loved Him with their mouth, and with their tongue they lied unto Him: but their heart was not right with Him," Ps.

lxxvii. 36. And again, "This people honour Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me; and in vain do they worship Me," Mat. xv. 8. (3.) That the practice of these holy acts of love, when done from the heart, is most agreeable to God, as being a worship proper to Him, an actual discharge of that duty which He demands from us as the first and greatest of all His commandments, and an exercise of the most excellent of all virtues. The heart is what God chiefly requires of us. "My son, says He, give Me thy heart;" and it is by fervent acts of holy love that we give our hearts to Him. (4.) They are also most beneficial to our souls, because they repress and weaken our self-love; they fortify the soul against temptation; they increase the habit of Divine love in the soul, and they are the best preservative against all the snares of the enemy at the hour of death. Hence, whoever wishes well to his own soul will not be satisfied with barely practising these holy acts of Divine love when he is strictly obliged to make them; but he will at all times, in his daily devotions, and frequently throughout the day, study to advance his soul in this Divine virtue by the frequent exercise of its holy acts.

Section III.

Of the Effects which Charity produces in the Soul.

Q. 6. What are the effects which charity produces in the soul?

A. Many and admirable are the blessed effects which this holy virtue produces in the soul; but we shall here notice only some of the most practical.

(1.) Zeal for the honour of God. Let us examine our

own hearts in order to understand this. When we have a sincere love for another, we wish him well; whatever pleases him affords us pleasure, and everything that injures him gives us pain and affliction; we are ready to do him all the service in our power, and to defend him from any evil. In fact, to love one is nothing else than to wish him well and do him good. See how ready one is to defend the honour of his prince whom he loves, and what pain it gives him to hear him vilified or dishonoured by others; see with what ardour a loving son defends the character of his absent father, how he endeavours to make others think well of him, and how much he is distressed and offended if any one speaks ill of his father in his presence: see the same effect of love in wives to their husbands, in husbands to their wives, and in sincere friends to one another. This effect, which is a necessary attendant on all love when sincere, is pre-eminently conspicuous in the love of God. The infinite excellence of God, who is the object of charity, the infinite claim He has to be loved, honoured, and served by all creatures, the incredible joy and delight that are found in His holy love above what can be found in the love of any creature, makes a soul, whose affections are fixed on Him, insatiable in her ardent desires of seeing Him honoured and served by all, and pierces her with the most sensible affliction when she sees Him dishonoured and offended. And these desires do not lie idle in such a soul, but excite her to do and suffer great things in order to promote the honour of the beloved object. The Book of Psalms is full of expressions of these ardent desires of the glory of God, and of invocations of heaven and earth, men, angels, and all creatures, to praise, bless, and magnify His holy name; and the examples of the apostles, and apostolic

men in all ages, show what great things this zeal for God's glory inspires those to do and suffer whose hearts are inflamed with His holy love; and as to their pain when they see God offended, who can conceive how it pierces their hearts, and fills their soul with anguish? "Moses was a man exceeding meek above all men that dwelt upon the earth," Num. xii. 3, and therefore never would be displeased, nor resent any injury done to himself; but when, coming down from the mountain, he saw the grievous injury done to God by His people in worshipping the golden calf, he "being very angry, threw the tables out of his hand, and broke them at the foot of the mount," Exod. xxxii. 19. The high-priest of God, Eli, now an old man, heard of the loss of the battle and the defeat of his people by the Philistines with tranquillity; he heard that his two sons had been slain in the battle with dry eyes, but when the messenger told him at last that the ark of God was taken, he was so oppressed with grief and affliction that "He fell from his stool backwards by the door, and broke his neck, and died," 1 Sam. iv. 18. David expresses his zeal for the glory of God in these strong terms: "The zeal of Thy house hath eaten me up, and the reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon me," Ps. lxviii. 10. "My zeal hath made me pine away, because my enemies forgot Thy words. . . . I beheld the trangressors, and I pined away because they kept not Thy word," Ps. cxviii. 139, 158. When God appeared to Elias in the desert, and asked him, "What dost thou here, Elias?" he answered, "With zeal have I been zealous for the Lord God of hosts, for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, they have thrown down Thy altars, they have slain Thy prophets with the sword," 3 Kings, xix. 10, 14. And when Esdras was told the

sins his people had been guilty of in his absence—"When I heard this word," says he, "I rent my mantle and my coat, and plucked off the hairs of my head and my beard, and I sat down mourning, . . . and at the evening sacrifice I rose up from my affliction, and having rent my mantle and my garment, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands to the Lord my God, and said, My God, I am confounded, and ashamed to lift up my face before Thee," &c., 1 Esd. ix. 3, 5, 6. Nay, the holy Mathathias upon his death-bed exhorted his sons "to be zealous for the law, and give their lives for the covenant of their fathers," 1 Mac. ii. 50. And his valiant son Judas exhorted his army to fight manfully against those nations "that are assembled," said he, "against us, to destroy us and our sanctuary; for it is better for us to die in battle than to see the evils of our nation and of the holies," 1 Mac. iii. 58. Here, then, we have a test by which to know what kind of love we have for God; for if we can hear His holy name profaned and blasphemed by oaths and curses, His infinite sanctity insulted by obscene words, His majesty contemned by numberless other sins without feeling the least concern, without showing the least displeasure, without saying a single word of disapprobation,—can we say we have any portion of His holy love in our hearts? We are so zealous for our own honour, the honour of our parents or friends, that if we hear the least word against it we are all on fire; and yet we are dumb stocks when the honour of God is concerned! But what shall we say if, instead of being displeased on such occasions, we take part in the sins committed, and make them a subject of mirth and laughter?

(2.) A sincere sorrow and contrition for one's own sins. If the love we bear to our parents or friends make

us sorrowful and afflicted when an evil comes upon them, much greater and more grievous would our sorrow be if we ourselves should be the cause of their sufferings; so also, and much more, does the true and sincere love of God fill a soul with sorrow and contrition on account of the sins she has committed against Him. His infinite excellence, which deserves all possible honour and veneration; His infinite beauty, which deserves all possible love; His infinite goodness to us, which demands all possible gratitude on our part; and all His other Divine perfections presenting themselves to a soul which is filled with His holy love, pierce her with the most feeling grief at the thought that she has ever been so unhappy as to offend and injure by her sins so amiable, so lovely a Being. "My eyes," says David, "have sent forth springs of water, because they have not kept Thy law," Ps. cxviii. 136. "I have laboured in my groanings: every night I will wash my bed; I will water my couch with my tears," Ps. vi. 7. No sooner was St Peter sensible of his crime in denying his beloved Master, than "going forth he wept bitterly," Mat. xxvi. 75. And the great love that Mary Magdalen had for Jesus Christ, for which "many sins were forgiven her," excited such grief for her former crimes that she washed His feet with hertears, and wiped them with the hair of her head. See here, then, another rule by which to judge of our love to God: for the same reason the love of God excites in the soul a horror and detestation of sin, as the only real evil, because it is an evil done to God, the great object of its love: hence the exhortation of the prophet, "You that love the Lord, hate evil," Ps. xcvi. 10; and therefore he says, "Lord, have I not hated them that hate Thee? and pined away because of Thy enemies? I have hated them with a perfect hatred,

and they have become enemies to me," Ps. cxxxviii. 21, 22. The only enemies of God are sins; and the prophet declares he hates them with a *perfect hatred;* that is, with an irreconcilable hatred, and above everything else that is horrible. He considers sin as his own greatest enemy, because an enemy to God, and declares that he who loves sin becomes an enemy to himself; "he that loveth iniquity hateth his own soul," Ps. x. 6. Thus all the saints of God who loved Him hated sin to such a degree as to be ready to suffer all evils and the worst of deaths rather than consent to it.

(3.) Another effect which the love of God produces in the soul is, to make us put a high value on the graces and benefits He bestows upon us, and be grateful to Him for them. Nothing is little in our eyes that comes from the hand of those we love. We measure the value of the favour, not by the worth it has in itself, but by the affection which inspires it. Every testimony of affection from those we love is delightful to us, and every favour from them is received as a new proof of their affection; hence it fills the heart with pleasure, and excites the most grateful sentiments in the soul, which naturally show themselves by every thankful testimony we can give of the sense we have of the obligation. Consequently, if we have a sincere love for God, this must make us set the highest value upon every favour we receive from Him, especially considering that they are all of inestimable value in themselves, of the utmost advantage to our souls, proceeding from His most pure and ardent love of us, and that we are of ourselves most undeserving of them. What sentiments of gratitude must these considerations excite in a loving soul! how must they urge her on to continual acts of thanksgiving, praise, and love to God! and so much the more when

we reflect that this return of thanksgiving and praise is the only one we can make for His favours, and what He expressly requires from us. Thus, "In all things give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you all," 1 Thes. v. 18. "All whatsoever you do in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him," Col. iii. 17. "Be instant in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving," Col. iv. 2. Nay, this is laid down as what ought to be the continual employment of a Christian. "Be ye filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual canticles, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God and the Father," Ephes. v. 18. Nothing is more pleasing to God than our faithful compliance with this duty, and nothing makes Him more ready to bestow new favours than gratitude for those received. Ingratitude, on the contrary, leads to our being deprived of grace and at last abandoned, as was the case with those of whom the apostle says: "Because, when they knew God, they have not glorified Him as God, nor given thanks, but became vain in their own thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened; for professing themselves to be wise they became fools; . . . therefore God gave them up to the desires of their heart," Rom. i. 21. Hence we find that giving thanks to God, and praising Him, was the continual employment of the holy servants of God. Of Tobias we are told that, even when struck with blindness, "he repined not against God because the evil of blindness had befallen him, but continued immovable in the fear of God, giving thanks to God all the days of his life," Tob. ii. 13. Job also, when misfortunes came upon

him, "fell down upon the ground and worshipped, and said, . . . the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, as it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done; blessed be the name of the Lord," Job, i. 20. David was diligent in this holy exercise, and the whole Psalms are full of the warmest expressions of gratitude and praise to God. And in all St Paul's Epistles how frequently does he give thanks to God for the favours bestowed upon his dear children to whom he writes, and for the graces he had himself received! Our blessed Saviour also, who came to be our model in all perfection, gives us frequent examples in the gospel of this holy exercise. We ought therefore often to meditate on the many favours we receive from God, and on the love and affection with which He gives them, that we may conceive a just sense of them, and excite our souls to gratitude and thanksgiving. And as everything that comes from the hand of God is designed for our good, whether it be agreeable to the views of our self-love or not, therefore we ought in all things and at all times to give thanks to God as His holy word requires, even in tribulations and afflictions, as Job and Tobias did. Happy those who from their heart comply with this sacred duty!

(4.) Charity also produces in the heart a love, respect, and veneration for everything that belongs to God, or is particularly connected with Him; and this is always the stronger, the closer that connection is. This is also a natural effect of love; for when we have a strong and tender affection for any one, our love is not confined to his person alone, it extends itself to everything that belongs to him; our regard for himself makes everything that is his dear to us. If our friend die, or be at a distance, how do we value every little present received from him, and everything in our possession that belongs to

him! What regard do not parents pay to anything belonging to a departed child! How do men esteem the picture of their friend! Hence the love of God never fails to give proof of its presence by respect and veneration for all holy things and holy persons on account of their particular relation to God; hence the reverence paid to the sacred Scriptures, to churches, altars, sacred vessels, to pictures of Christ and His saints, and our love and veneration for the saints of Christ and their holy relics. And hence in a particular manner arises the love we are commanded to have for our neighbours, because they are so intimately connected with God, as we shall consider more fully below, Chap. XIII.

Q. 7. What are the means by which we may acquire this holy love of God?

A. (1.) Fervent prayer. "The charity of God is poured abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost," Rom. v. 5; and "the fruit of the Spirit is charity," Gal. v. 22. It is therefore a gift of God, by the operation of the Holy Ghost. Now, prayer is declared by Jesus Christ to be a most powerful means to move God to bestow His Holy Spirit upon us, with all His graces. "If you, being evil," says He, "know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from heaven give the good Spirit to them that ask Him?" Luke, xi. 13. (2.) Self-denial and the mortification of self-love. By self-love our hearts and affections are placed upon creatures, and this love is opposed to and destructive of the love of the Creator, so that it is impossible they can both reign in the same heart. "No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will sustain the one and despise the other; you cannot serve God and Mammon," Mat. vi. 24. And St John expressly declares that "If any man love the world, the charity of

the Father is not in him," 1 John, ii. 15. Hence, again, we see how much we are indebted to Jesus Christ for obliging all His followers to deny themselves, and take off their affections from creatures, and how much He had our real good at heart in doing so; and, consequently, how careful we ought to be to break all the unhappy ties of affection that attach us to creatures and to ourselves, if we wish that the holy love of God should reign in our hearts. See above, Chap. IV., Sec. 2. (3.) Frequent meditation on the infinite love of God to us. Love naturally begets love, and the more we know how much any one loves us, the more forcibly we are drawn to love him. Now, it is by frequent meditation on the love of God to us, and the most wonderful effects of this love, that we come to know how much He loves us! See above, Chap. III. (4.) Frequent meditation on the infinite beauty and perfections of God; for by this we shall come to see and feel how infinitely lovely and amiable He is, how much He deserves all the love of our souls, and how unworthy creatures are to possess any place in our heart in comparison to Him. Now, it is chiefly by contemplating attentively any beauteous object that our heart contracts an affection for it. See above, Chap. V. (5.) Constant exercise of those duties which His holy love requires from us; studying in all things to please Him, avoiding everything that can offend Him, endeavouring continually to do His holy will; and frequently exercising ourselves in making from our hearts fervent acts of love.

CHAPTER X.

RELIGION.

Q. 1. WHAT is meant by religion?

A. Religion is that virtue by which we give to God the honour and worship which are due to Him, as the first beginning, the sovereign Lord, and the last end of all things; acknowledging, by the proper act of religion, His supreme excellence and sovereign dominion over us, and our subjection to and entire dependence upon Him. . . . Hence it appears that the virtue of religion, taken in its full extent, embraces all the duties we owe to God as contained in the three first commandments, because by each of them we give sovereign worship to God: but those duties which more immediately and properly belong to religion are devotion, prayer, and adoration; and the acts of other virtues become also acts of religion when they are done with a view of honouring God. It is in this sense that St James says, "This is religion clean and undefiled before God and the Father, to visit the fatherless and widows in their tribulation, and to keep one's self unspotted from this world," James, i. 27. Devotion, properly speaking, is a general virtue, and signifies an affectionate readiness of the will to do in all things what we know or believe to

be agreeable to the will of God, with a view to please Him. In this sense we have already considered it as a branch of the love of God. See Chap. IX. Nos. 2 and 3. The duties of prayer and adoration remain to be explained.

Section I.

Prayer.

Q. 2. What is prayer?

A. Prayer is the raising up our hearts to God, to beg His grace and all good things. It is therefore a conversing with God, to lay before Him our miseries and necessities, and to ask Him for mercy and relief. It is founded upon faith and hope; for, as the apostle says, "How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed?" Rom. x. 14. And St James tell us that when we ask anything of God we must ask "in faith, nothing wavering, for he that wavers need not expect to receive anything of the Lord," James, i. 6. In fact, we pray to God because we believe He is able and willing to help us, and because we hope in His sacred promises, and through the merits of Christ that He will help us. Prayer is therefore an act of religion, because by it we acknowledge our weakness, misery, and unworthiness, our dependence upon God, and our subjection to Him; and also because by it we confess Him to be our sovereign Lord, and the giver of all good, and we honour His infinite goodness, from which we hope to obtain what we stand in need of. It is also, like all other good things, a gift of God, for of ourselves we are not "sufficient to think a good thought," nor can we say, "Lord Jesus, but

by the Holy Spirit;" and therefore God Almighty says, "I will pour out upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of prayers," Zach. xii. 10. "For we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings," Rom. viii. 26; that is, inspireth the saints, and teacheth them to pray with great fervour.

Prayer may be either internal or external. *Internal* or mental prayer is that which we make in the heart, addressing our wishes and desires to God without expressing them in words. Of Anna the mother of Samuel it is said, "As Anna had her heart full of grief, she prayed to the Lord, shedding many tears. . . . Now Anna spoke in heart, and only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard at all," 1 Samuel, i. 10 and 13. David also says, "The meditation of my heart shall be always in Thy sight, O Lord, my helper and my redeemer," Psalm xviii. 15. And again, "Delight in the Lord, says he, and He will give thee the requests of thy heart," Ps. xxxvi. 4. *External* or vocal prayer is that which is made with the mouth and expressed in words. Of this St Paul says, "Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of lips, giving glory to His name," Heb. xiii. 15. David also says to God, "Let my soul be filled as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips," Ps. lxii. 6. And of the wise man it is said, "He will give his heart to resort early to the Lord that made him, and he will pray in the sight of the Most High. He will open his mouth in prayer, and he will make supplication for his sins," Ecclus. xxxix. 6.

Q. 3. Is the duty of prayer necessary for obtaining salvation?

A. Prayer is one of the most necessary duties of a Chris-

tian, both for obtaining salvation and for obtaining every other good we need, whether as the means of salvation, or as contributing to our present happiness; and this will appear from the following convincing reasons.

(1.) This necessity of prayer arises from two important truths which our holy faith teaches; the first is, that of ourselves, and of our own natural strength, without the special help of God's grace, we cannot do the least thing towards salvation; nay, that, considering the natural proneness of our hearts to evil, the violence of our passions, the many allurements to sin to which we are continually exposed, and the constant attacks and snares of our spiritual enemies, who are going about as roaring lions seeking to devour us, without particular assistance of the grace of God we cannot live for any space of time without falling into mortal sin. See above, Chap. VIII. Q. 4. And much less, when we have fallen into that misery, can we of ourselves rise again by repentance. The second truth is, that the ordinary means which God has appointed to confer this necessary grace upon us, is prayer. "Ask," says He, "and it shall be given unto you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth," Mat. vii. 7. We are not only incapable of doing anything towards salvation without the grace of God, but of ourselves, "who are by nature children of wrath," we are unworthy of receiving any grace from Him. After the fall of man, it was the pure effect of the Divine goodness that God was willing to save us, or to show us any mercy. He might have treated us with the same rigorous justice as He treated the fallen angels; but He was pleased to show us mercy; and not only to be willing to save us, but also to provide for us the means necessary for salvation. Our salvation,

then, and all the means to obtain it, are the free gifts of God, through the merits of Jesus Christ; and as He is absolute master of His own gifts, He can demand whatever conditions He pleases. Now, the conditions He requires are, that we humble ourselves before Him, acknowledge our need of His grace, and ask it of His mercy. But we cannot even do this without His assistance. The ability to pray is itself a gift of God, and, consequently, this first step to our salvation must come from Him, according to what He says in the gospel, "No man can come to Me unless it be given him by My Father," John, vi. 66; and "No man cometh to the Father but by Me," John, xiv. 6; therefore, as "He will have all men to be saved," 1 Tim. ii. 4, out of His infinite mercy He freely and generously bestows the grace of prayer upon all men, moving them to have recourse to Him, and enabling them to do so; but He expressly wills that we should co-operate with this grace, and ask of Him whatsoever we stand in need of, as the condition required on our part for obtaining it. In fact, we find that the first step taken by converted sinners—the first effect produced in them by that grace which moves them to repentance—is to have recourse to God by prayer; thus St Paul, upon his conversion, immediately cries to God, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" The humble publican beats his breast and cries, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner." Cornelius "gave much alms to the people, and prayed always." And all those who sought help from Jesus Christ in the gospel, had recourse to Him by prayer. Hence it appears that prayer is the universal means of obtaining from God all necessary help for our salvation; it is the key which opens to us the treasures of heaven; it is the channel through which all graces come to our soul; it is the first

grace given us, and the last taken away; and therefore the Church of Christ, in one of her general councils, says, "God does not command impossibilities, but by commanding us (to do anything), He admonishes us to do what we can, to pray for what help we need, and then He helps us to make us able," Council of Trent, Sess. vi., chap. ii. What still more fully shows the necessity of prayer is, that the want of it cannot be supplied by anything else; and in this it differs from all other means of salvation, and is shown to be the most necessary of all. The want of actual baptism may be supplied by martyrdom; the want of the sacrament of penance by perfect contrition; fasting and penitential works by alms-deeds; alms-deeds themselves by patient suffering; and so of others; but the want of prayer can be supplied by nothing else; and therefore the Scripture expressly says, "You have not, because you ask not," James, iv. 2. To ask is appointed by Almighty God to be the assured means of obtaining the graces you stand in need of; and if you neglect to use the means, the graces annexed to that means will not be bestowed. Nor need we be surprised; for when we consider the excellence of those graces, the need we have of them, our misery without them, and the easy and certain way by prayer of acquiring them, it shows an unpardonable contempt and disregard of them, and of the glorious end to be obtained, if we neglect to pray for them.

2. The necessity of prayer, and our obligation to practise it, arise also from the repeated commands laid down in the holy Scriptures: "And Jesus spoke also a parable to them, that we ought always to pray, and not to faint," Luke, xviii. 1; where the word *ought* clearly implies a strict obligation. Again, after describing the danger of being called out of this world unprepared, the

only means He proposes for avoiding so great a misery is watching in prayer; "Watch ye, therefore, praying at all times," Luke, xxi. 36. "Take ye heed, watch and pray; for you know not when the time is," Mark, xiii. 33. The same duty He inculcates as the means of overcoming the many temptations to which we are exposed: "Watch ye, and pray, that ye enter not into temptation," Mat. xxvi. 41. St Paul again and again inculcates the same duty; "Pray without ceasing," says he; "in all things give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you all," 1 Thess. v. 17. "And take unto you the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; by all prayer and supplication, praying at all times in the Spirit," Eph. vi. 17. "Be instant in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving," Col. iv. 2. "Be nothing solicitous; but in everything by prayer with supplication, with thanksgiving, let your petitions be made known to God," Phil. iv. 6. St Peter is no less pressing on this subject. "The end of all," says he, "is at hand; be prudent, therefore, and watch in prayer," 1 Pet. iv. 7. "If any of you want wisdom," says St James, "let him ask of God, Who giveth to all abundantly, and it shall be given him," James, i. 5. And again, "Is any of you sad? let him pray," James, v. 13. Add to all these what the Holy Ghost commands by the mouth of the wise man, "Let nothing hinder thee from praying always, and be not afraid to be justified even to death, for the reward of God continueth for ever," Ecclus. xviii. 22; and He tells us that the truly wise man "will open his mouth in prayer, and make supplication for his sins," Ecclus. xxxix. 7. And by David: "Call upon Me," says God, "in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee," Ps. xlix. "And he shall cry to Me, and I will hear him; I am with him in his trouble, and I will deliver

him," Ps. xc. 15. In Job also it is said, "Thou shalt pray to Him, and He will hear thee," Job, xxii. 27. Tobias too gives this advice to his son, "Bless God at all times, and desire of Him to direct thy ways, and that all thy counsels may abide in Him," Tobit, iv. 20. Upon these repeated testimonies of holy Scripture three things are to be observed. (1.) We see how frequently in Scripture this duty is inculcated and urged in express terms, showing beyond contradiction our obligation to practise it. (2.) We see prayer commanded as being the means appointed for obtaining some of the most important graces of which we stand in need, such as strength to resist temptation, pardon of sin, heavenly wisdom to direct us, consolation in sadness, final perseverance, and a happy death. (3.) This shows that the grace of prayer itself is never wanting to us; the frequent command to practise it presupposes that we have the grace to do so; and we nowhere find any means proposed for obtaining this grace itself; consequently, if we do not use it, the fault is entirely our own, and the fatal consequences of such neglect will be justly laid to our charge.

3. This obligation is further confirmed by the example of Christ Himself and His saints. Of Christ we are told, that "when He had dismissed the multitude, He went up into a mountain alone to pray," Mat. xiv. 23. And rising very early in the morning, going out He went into a desert place, and there He prayed," Mark, i. 35. "And He retired into the desert and prayed," Luke, v. 16. Things particularly important, He began it by prayer. Thus before He chose his twelve apostles, "He went out into a mountain to pray, and He passed the whole night in the prayer of God. And when it was day, He called to Him His disciples, and He chose twelve of

them, whom He also named Apostles," Luke, vi. 12. In like manner, before He entered upon His passion, He passed three hours in the garden in most fervent prayer. Now why all this? He surely had no need of prayer on His own account; but He prayed for our instruction and example, to show us the necessity of prayer, and how diligent we ought to be in the exercise of this important duty. For the same reason He also taught us how to pray, and gave us most necessary instruction on the intention which we ought to have in praying, Mat. vi. 5. His apostles, and indeed all His holy servants, under the law as well as under the gospel, were no less assiduous in this duty, in their general practice, and particularly when they had anything important to perform, or found themselves in difficulties. Thus the apostles gave charge of the temporal things of the church to the seven deacons, in order that they might "give themselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the word," Acts, vi. 4. When they were preparing themselves for the coming of the Holy Ghost, "they all continued with one accord in prayer," Acts, i. 14. When they were to choose one to make up their number in place of Judas, two of good repute were presented to them, "and praying they said, Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two Thou hast chosen," Acts, i. 24. When they chose the seven deacons, "praying, they imposed their hands upon them," Acts, vi. 6. When they were to send Paul and Barnabas on their mission, "They, fasting and praying, and imposing their hands upon them, sent them away," Acts, xiii. 3. When St Peter was thrown into prison, in order to be put to death, "prayer was made without ceasing by the church to God for him," Acts, xii. 5. When Paul and Silas "were put in prison, and their feet made fast in the stocks, at midnight pray-

ing, they praised God, . . . and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken, and all the doors were opened, and every one's bonds were loosed," Acts, xvi. 24. Anna the prophetess is commended in the gospel because "she departed not from the temple, by fastings and prayers serving night and day," Luke, ii. 37. Daniel the prophet chose rather to be thrown into a den of lions than to neglect this duty, three stated times every day, Dan. vi. David rose at midnight to pray to God, and seven times a day, at stated hours, performed this duty. But it would be endless to mention all the instances of this which are found throughout the Scripture, and in the lives of the saints and servants of God. Now why such assiduity, why the continual attention and diligence of these holy souls in performing this duty? For no other reason, surely, than because being sensible of their infirmities, and the great need they had of help from God, they saw the necessity of recurring constantly to Him by prayer. And is not our obligation to perform this duty equally strong?

Q. 4. Since the obligation of this duty of prayer is so great, and our necessity for doing it so urgent, what excuses can those bring who neglect it?

A. There can be no excuse for the neglect of so important a duty; and the only cause of omitting it is our carelessness in the great affair of salvation. Those who are guilty of neglecting prayer bring some frivolous pretexts for their neglect; but these only show how little of the spirit of religion they possess. Thus they allege (1.) want of time, on account of the multitude and importance of their worldly affairs. But what can be so important as their salvation? What so necessary as prayer, the principal means to secure it? What will all their endeav-

ours avail to obtain success, even in their worldly affairs, without the blessing of God? See above, Chap. VIII. Q. 14. And how can they obtain this if they neglect to ask it? Is not prayer the principal means to make their affairs prosper? Where is their faith? What would they think of a person who, wishing to build a house, should prepare stone, lime, wood, and every other material, without thinking of a builder? Besides, how much time do they throw away every day in idleness? in vain amusements? in sin? (2.) Want of a proper place and convenience: but Ezechias, when sick, prayed in his bed; Jeremias in his dungeon; Daniel in the den of lions; Jonah in the whale's belly; the three children in the furnace; Manasses in prison; our Saviour in the garden; the penitent thief upon the cross; Paul and Silas in the stocks; Stephen amidst the showers of stones, —and they were all heard, and their petitions granted. Wherever we are, God is present with us. He resides in our heart as in His temple, and there is always ready to hear our prayers. (3.) Unworthiness: I am so great a sinner, I am not worthy to pray. But, alas! the more sinful we are, the more need we have of prayer. It is the only resource; and it is chiefly for such that Christ came into the world, to supply for their unworthiness by His infinite merits. See above, Chap. VIII. Q. 5. Such sinners are like Job, when he said of himself, "My flesh being consumed, my bone hath cleaved to my skin, and nothing but lips are left about my teeth," Job, xix. 20. Lost to all other means of salvation, their only remedy is to use their lips in fervent prayer to God. (4.) Ignorance: But I cannot pray; I am ignorant, and know not how to pray. Strange! that we who are so eloquent in asking help of men in our bodily needs should be at a loss how to ask help of God for those of our soul! But

who is there that cannot say the Lord's Prayer? It is the best of all prayers—it contains all that is necessary: say it, say it from the heart, frequently, attentively, and it will suffice. But if we be sensible of our spiritual miseries, and have a sincere desire of a remedy, words will never be wanting sufficient to obtain mercy. David by one word, "I have sinned," said with a humble and contrite heart, obtained pardon of two grievous sins, of adultery and murder. The humble publican was justified by this short prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner," repeated with the same penitential dispositions. "Lord, remember me when Thou comest to Thy kingdom," found mercy to the penitent thief upon the cross. Besides, "When you pray," says our blessed Saviour, "speak not much as the heathens do, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking," Mat. vi. 7. God requires the desire of the heart more than a multitude of words. Be sensible of your wants, have a sincere desire of God's assistance, trust in His mercy for relief, and you will never be at a loss to find words sufficient to pray with profit.

Q. 5. Is prayer a certain means of obtaining mercy and help from God?

A. St James says, "You ask, and you receive not, because you ask amiss," James, iv. 3. Which shows that, if we pray improperly, either as to the thing we ask or as to the manner of asking, we need not expect to be heard. But, on the other hand, if we ask for the proper object and in a proper manner, prayer is not only a certain, but an infallible means of obtaining what we ask. Nay, God Himself speaks in His holy Scriptures in such a way as shows that prayer does violence in a manner to His heart, and constrains Him to grant our requests. Thus when Moses prayed to God for the

people, who had fallen into the crime of idolatry by worshipping the golden calf, God said to him, "Let Me alone, that My wrath may be kindled against them, and that I may destroy them," Exod. xxxii. 10. But Moses, who knew well the force and efficacy of prayer, would not desist, but prayed with the greater ardour for forgiveness; and at last God yielded to Moses, and "was appeased from doing the evil which He had spoken against His people," ver. 14. Here we see that God was resolved to destroy the people, and certainly would have done so had not the prayers of Moses opposed His resolution, and constrained Him to forgive them. In like manner, when provoked by the sins of the Jews, and resolved to cast them from before His face, He said to Jeremiah, "Therefore do not thou pray for this people, nor take to thee praise and supplication for them, and do not withstand Me," Jer. vii. 16. Which last words, *do not withstand Me*, like those above said to Moses, *let Me alone*, manifestly show that such is the force and efficacy of prayer that it can withstand the wrath of God, and in a manner constrain Him to peace and pardon. This is further manifested by what the wise man says of the prayer of the humble man, that it "shall pierce the clouds, and till it come nigh he will not be comforted, and he will not depart till the Most High behold," Ecclus. xxxv. 21; where we see that prayer, when properly performed, is persisting before God, importunes Him, will take no denial, nor turn away till its request be granted.

Q. 6. These are surely amazing truths, and being declared by God Himself are no less certain than wonderful: but whence comes it that prayer has such a surprising influence with almighty God?

A. This arises from two reasons: (1.) The repeated

promises of God, by which He has engaged His sacred word, His truth, and His fidelity, to grant our requests, when we pray to Him as we ought. "I say unto you," says Jesus Christ, "ask and it shall be given you; seek and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened," Luke, xi. 9. Is it possible to make a more clear and express promise than this is? And He confirms it with his usual asseveration, "I say unto you." I, who am truth itself, and who am infinitely powerful, able to make good whatever I say, "I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you." In the same manner He says on another occasion, "Therefore I say to you, Whatsoever you ask, when you pray, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come unto you," Mark, xi. 24. Could Christ Himself engage His word in more universal terms? "I go to the Father," says He again, "and whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you shall ask Me anything in My name, that I will do," John, xiv. 13. So also, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you," John, xv. 7. But as the apostles had not made the proper use of these repeated promises, He afterwards renews them with a still more solemn asseveration, and exhorts them to ask, that their hearts may rejoice: "Amen, amen, I say unto you, if you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it you. Hitherto you have not asked anything in My name. Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full," John, xvi. 23. (2.) The efficacy of prayer arises also from the infinite goodness, liberality, and mercy of God, by which He is powerfully inclined to communicate Himself and

all good things to His beloved creatures, whom He has made to be happy in the enjoyment of Himself for ever; and nothing prevents this desire to bestow all goods upon us, but the want of proper dispositions in our souls for receiving them. When, therefore, we pray in the proper manner, this impediment to the effects of His goodness is removed, and a door is opened into our souls, by which every good thing we ask obtains admittance. On this subject our Saviour Himself speaks as follows: "What man is there among you, of whom if his son ask bread, will he reach him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he reach him a serpent? If then you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" Mat. vii. 9. A most convincing argument; for if men, though evil and imperfect, cannot resist the just requests of their children, how much less will God, Who is infinitely good, merciful, and liberal, resist the humble prayers of His servants, or refuse those good things which they ask? Can Jesus Christ fail in His promises? No, this is impossible; "God is not as a man, that He should lie; nor as the son of man, that He should be changed. Hath He said then, and will He not do? Hath He spoken, and will He not fulfil?" Numb. xxiii. 19. Hence, therefore, it is infallibly certain, that when we pray to God for His good things, and do so in the proper manner, our prayers will be heard, and these good things granted us; this is as certain as the word of Jesus Christ must remain true, and that the promise of God cannot fail to be fulfilled.

Q. 7. Are there any examples in Scripture of the efficacy of prayer?

A. The Scripture is full of such examples. Thus (1.)

Rebecca, the wife of Isaac, was barren; "And Isaac besought the Lord for His wife, because she was barren, and He heard him, and made Rebecca to conceive," Gen. xxv. 21. So also Anna, the mother of Samuel, had been long barren, and suffered many reproaches on that account; and she prayed to God, as we have seen above, and He heard her; and when she presented her son in the temple, she said to the high-priest Eli, "For this child did I pray, and the Lord hath granted my petition which I asked of Him," 1 Sam. i. 27. (2.) When king Ezechias was sick to death, the prophet Isaias went to him and said, "Thus saith the Lord God, Give charge concerning thy house, for thou shalt die and not live. And he turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord . . . And before Isaias was gone out of the middle of the court, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, Go back and tell Ezechias, the captain of my people, thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, and I have seen thy tears, and behold I have healed thee; on the third day thou shalt go up to the temple of the Lord, and I will add to thy days fifteen years," 4 Kings, xx. 1. (3.) "Elias was a man passable, like unto us," says St James, "and with prayer he prayed that it might not rain upon the earth, and it rained not for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit," James, v. 17. (4.) King Herod, "when he had apprehended St Peter, cast him into prison, delivering him to four files of soldiers to be kept, intending after the Pasch to bring him forth to the people. "But prayer was made without ceasing by the church to God for him. And Herod would have brought him forth the same night . . . The Lord sent His angel, who took him out of prison in a most miraculous manner, and de-

livered him out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews," Acts, xii. 4, 11. (5.) The example of Moses, related above, Q. 4, is most amazing; but it were endless to relate all that are found in Scripture of this kind, every book almost being full of them.

Q. 8. What are the conditions required to make our prayers agreeable to God, and efficacious in obtaining what we ask?

A. This, indeed, is a most important subject, as it is from want of some one of these conditions that our prayers are rendered fruitless, and deprived of the effect which we desire. There are several conditions required on our part, which therefore must be carefully attended to. They are:—

1. To be in friendship with God, and free from the guilt of sin. When a person lives in the guilt of known sin, and in disgrace with God, his soul is utterly incapable of receiving His heavenly gifts, and he is positively unworthy of receiving any favour from Him; and the Holy Scripture assures us that nothing is a greater hindrance to our prayer being heard than to live in such a state of enmity with God. David tells us that "The eyes of the Lord are upon the just, and His ears open unto His prayers; but the countenance of the Lord is against them that do evil things, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth," Ps. xxxiii. 16, 17. And God Himself says to all such, "When you stretch forth your hands, I will turn away My eye from you; and when you multiply prayer I will not hear, for your hands are full of blood," Isa. i. 15; that is, your souls are defiled with the guilt of your sins which render you hateful to Me, like a person whose hands are reeking with the blood of His neighbour whom he has murdered.

So also Isaias says to sinners, "Your iniquities have divided between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He should not hear," Isa. lix. 2. Hence, Jeremias laments the sins of his people in these words: "We have done wickedly and provoked Thee to wrath; therefore Thou art inexorable. . . . Thou hast set a cloud before Thee that our prayer may not pass through," Lament. iii. 42, 44. Nay, the wise man declares that "He that turneth away his ears from hearing the law, his prayer shall be an abomination," Prov. xxviii. 9.

It is true indeed that though a person has been ever so great a sinner, yet if he return to God with sincere repentance, and cry for mercy, his prayer will be heard; and the Scripture is full of the most encouraging assurances to all such: thus, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unjust man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He is bountiful to forgive," Isa. lv. 6. And the examples of the humble publican and the prodigal son, with other such, show clearly how ready Almighty God is to hear the prayers of the greatest sinners when they return to Him, and cry for mercy. But to be entitled to all the glorious effects of prayer, and to the sacred promises which Jesus Christ makes to hear our prayers, we must forsake our evil ways, and be in friendship with Him; and this condition is expressly made to these promises. Thus, "If you abide in Me," says Jesus Christ, "and My words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you," John, xv. 7. "He that loveth God shall obtain pardon for his sins by prayer, and shall refrain himself from them, and shall be heard in the

prayer of days," Ecclus. iii. 4. "Delight in the Lord, and He will give thee the request of thy heart," Ps. xxxvi. 4. "Dearly beloved," says St John, "if our heart do not reprehend us, we have confidence towards God; and whatsoever we shall ask we shall receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight," 1 John, iii. 21. And therefore St James assures us that "The continual prayer of a just man availeth much," James, v. 16.

2. That the things we pray for be conducive to salvation, and according to the will of God. We have seen above, Chap. V. Q. 8. No. 2, that the great end which God had in view in creating this universe, and in all He has done in it, whether in the order of nature or of grace, is the salvation of souls; and that all the good things He has bestowed upon us in this life are intended only as helps or means to enable us to secure this great end of our being. Hence the riches and enjoyments of this world, if they be so used as to promote our salvation, are real goods to us; but if we abuse them to the injury of our souls, they become real evils. On the contrary, if the miseries and sufferings of this life are so used as to be of service to our souls, however afflicting they be in the mean time, they are in fact real goods; but if we abuse them to the loss of our souls, they are real evils. We have also seen that the salvation of our soul is the only important affair we have to think of; that it is of no consequence, in what state we be while in this valley of tears, whether in wealth or poverty, in sickness or health, in ease or pain, provided we save our souls; but that if we lose our souls, all is lost for ever. Finally, we have further seen, Chap. IV. Q. 3. No. 5, that, considering the corruption of our nature, it is much

more difficult to save our souls amidst plenty and abundance of worldly enjoyments than with a moderate share of the necessaries of life, or even amidst sufferings and afflictions. From these undoubted principles it follows that the great and continual object of our desires, and consequently of our prayers, ought to be our eternal salvation, and those goods necessary for securing it; such as victory over our passions, grace to resist temptations, freedom from sin, advancement in virtue, patience in sufferings, union with the will of God, and final perseverance by a happy death. We are absolutely certain that all these things are according to the will of God, and what He is most ready to grant, because "He wills all men to be saved," 1 Tim. ii. 4. But as to the goods of this world, or deliverance from its evils, a Christian ought never to desire nor pray for them, but only in as far as God sees they may be of use to his soul. We have seen, Chap. IV. Q. 4, how strongly Jesus Christ forbids His followers to set their hearts on these things, or to seek their happiness in them. He strictly enjoins them by self-denial to take off their affections from them, promising the things of this life in such measure as will not be injurious to their souls. See Chap. IV. Q. 7. (1.) From this it is manifest that when we pray for salvation, and the graces conducive to it, we may rely on being heard in the manner that God sees best for us; because it is to these goods that the promises of hearing our prayers are made. (2.) When we pray for temporal goods, the promises are only conditional. If God sees it is for the good of our souls, He will grant what we ask; if not, He will refuse it; unless in punishment of our too great anxiety, and our attachment to these goods, He should grant in His anger what He would refuse in His mercy. Hence, (3.) We may and ought to pray for

the former goods with all the ardour of our souls, and with all the confidence of being heard, and without any condition. But (4.) with regard to our temporal necessities, we ought either not ask for them, but, humbly laying our necessities before God, leave it to Him by a holy resignation to His will to do as He sees best; or if we ask them, as we may lawfully do, we ought to ask them only as secondary and accessory means of salvation, and always with this condition, if God sees them to be for the good of our souls. All this is confirmed by repeated testimonies of Scripture; thus, "Be not solicitous, therefore, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? for after all these things do the heathens seek: for your Father knows that you have need of all those things. Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added to you," Mat. vi. 31. Again, "Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it you," John, xvi. 23. What can we ask in the name of the Saviour, but what conduces to our salvation? Would it not be injurious to Him to ask anything in his name which would prove hurtful to our souls? and would He be a Saviour to us if He should grant such a prayer? "If you then, being evil, know how to give good things to your children, how much more will your Father Who is in heaven give good things to them that ask them?" Mat. vii. 11.

What are good things in the judgment of God? Surely only such as are profitable to our soul? Would God be giving us good things if He were to grant to our prayers what He knows would make us eternally miserable? Is it His will to give us such goods? and would it be asking according to His will, if we

should pray for such? It is upon asking according to His will that our confidence of being heard must be founded; hence St John says, "This is the confidence which we have towards Him, that whatsoever we shall ask *according to His will*, He heareth us; and we know that He heareth us whatsoever we ask; we know we have the petitions which we request of Him," 1 John, v. 14.

As to obtaining temporal goods, or being delivered from temporal evils, Christ Himself taught us by His own example to pray for them only conditionally, and with resignation; for being oppressed with sorrow in the garden at the sight of the dreadful chalice of sufferings He was about to endure, He prayed thus, "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt," Mat. xxvi. 39; and again, "Father, if Thou wilt, remove this chalice from Me; but yet not My will, but Thine be done," Luke, xxii. 42. Here we see that it is lawful and laudable to pray for temporal favours, but that all such prayers ought to be made with perfect resignation to the will of God, and on condition that He sees it proper to grant them. We must pray for them, because prayer is the necessary means to obtain them, as well as all other goods; but we must leave the result entirely to God, because we know not if they would be for our good or for our injury. If we receive not what we ask, He will grant us something better: for prayer can never be fruitless; it is a promise made by Christ Himself, that "every one that asketh" (*properly*) "receiveth," Mat. vii. 8; and when we ask temporal goods as Christ did, we surely ask properly; and therefore receive we will, if not the very thing we ask, something more for our advantage. Thus St Paul thrice besought the Lord to be delivered from the angel

of Satan that was given to buffet him, and was denied that favour; but he received a greater—plentiful grace to support and enable him to overcome that enemy.

3. That we pray with attention and fervour. These two qualities of prayer are joined, because they naturally arise from and are accompanied by each other. Prayer, properly speaking, consists of two things—the desires of our heart for some good, and the manifestation of those desires to God; and it is evident that if either of these two be wanting, there is no prayer. This manifestation may be either by the heart alone, and this is to *pray mentally;* or may be expressed in words, and this is to *pray vocally.* The foundation, then, of prayer is the desire of the heart; by it the heart is disposed to receive the things we pray for. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill," Mat. v. 6. These desires arise from our esteem of the goods we wish. The more earnest our desire, the greater is our esteem; but if our desires be weak and languid, our esteem must be but small. Now, as the goods of God are of inestimable value in themselves, He requires us to have a great esteem and desire of them. This is what moves Him in a particular manner to bestow His gifts upon us. "The Lord hath heard the desire of the poor; Thy ear hath heard the preparation of their heart," Ps. ix. 17. (Heb.) "In Thy strength, O Lord, the king shall joy, and in Thy salvation he shall rejoice exceedingly; Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and Thou hast not withholden from him the will of his lips," Ps. xx. 1. "That which the wicked feareth shall come upon him; to the just their desire shall be given," Prov. x. 24. And when Daniel "set his face to make supplication, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes," and to pray for his people with great fervour, which he showed both

in the expressions of his prayer itself, and in those penitential works with which he accompanied it, at last the angel Gabriel appeared to him and said, " O Daniel, I am now come forth to teach thee, and that thou mightest understand. From the beginning of thy prayers the word came forth : and I am come to show it to thee, because thou art a man of desires," Dan. ix. 3, 22.

But when a person has no esteem for the good things of God, when he has no great desire of them, when he prefers the perishable things of this life, and is more solicitous about these than the concerns of eternity, he is then totally indisposed for receiving the gifts of God. He may recite some prayer, but being himself indifferent, and his prayers languid, cold, and heartless, they are rather loathsome to God than pleasing, and more apt to move Him to indignation than to pity, seeing they show a contempt of Him and a preference of the world. Hence it is manifest that our prayers must proceed from a heart inflamed with an ardent desire of the inestimable goods which we ask, as the incense, which in Scripture is proposed as an emblem of fervent prayer, sends up its clouds of perfume towards heaven, when itself is burning upon the fire in the censer. Hence David says, " Let my prayer be directed as incense in Thy sight, the lifting up of my hands as evening sacrifice," Ps. cxl. 2. And such are the prayers of the saints of God, of whom we are told that " the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the saints ascended up before God from the hand of the angel," Apoc. viii. 4. Now when we manifest these desires to God mentally, and in the heart alone, though in some high degree of supernatural prayer the imagination may sometimes be carried away with various distractions even while the heart and will are exercising the most fervent affections towards God, yet ordinarily

this is not the case. Expressing our desires to God in our heart naturally draws the attention of the mind along with it. But the case is very different in vocal prayer, for there it too often happens that we recite with our lips words which express the desires of the heart, whilst our mind is wandering on a thousand idle and worldly objects, and the heart itself is perhaps engaged in affections very different, sometimes even contrary, to those which the words contain. These distractions of the mind in vocal prayer may arise from different causes—(1.) From the devil, who, knowing the immense benefit of prayer, seeks by every means either to hinder us from applying to it by putting a thousand impediments in our way, engaging us in a multitude of worldly cares and amusements, and giving us a dislike and aversion to prayer: or if he cannot hinder us from practising it, he endeavours to hinder its good effects by filling our mind in time of prayer with a thousand imaginations and wandering thoughts that perhaps never entered at another time. (2.) From bodily infirmity, the natural weakness of our mind in our present state, and the instability of our imagination; for "the corruptible body is a load upon the soul, and the earthly habitation presseth down the mind that museth upon many things," Wisd. ix. 15. This natural indisposition to prayer is augmented by our attachment to creatures, and by our being continually occupied with worldly affairs and amusements; for these objects make a deep impression on the imagination, are always present to the mind, and so fill the heart that it can with difficulty apply to any other thing. (3.) From ourselves; when in time of prayer we either voluntarily set our thoughts upon worldly objects, or knowingly entertain them when suggested to our mind by either of the two former causes. Now when distracting thoughts

present themselves in time of prayer against our will, and we endeavour to banish them, and to keep our mind attentive to the presence of God, they, though ever so importunate, will not hinder our prayers from being heard by God, Who, "knowing our frame, and remembering that we are dust," Ps. cii. 14, pities our weakness, assists us with His grace, and rewards our fidelity in resisting such temptations. But the case is very different with those distractions which arise from the third cause; for if, while we pretend to honour God by prayer, we permit our thoughts to wander, or wilfully entertain ideas suggested by the devil, without attending to the Divine presence, our prayers will not only be fruitless, but displeasing to God. Such pretended prayer is in fact no prayer, but mere hypocrisy; it wants the first requisite of prayer, which is the desire of the heart. It is the prayer spoken of by the prophet Isaias, whose words our blessed Saviour applies to the Jews: "Ye hypocrites, well has Isaias prophesied of you, saying, This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. In vain do they worship Me," Mat. xv. 7. Of such also David says, "They loved Him with their mouth, and with their tongue they lied unto Him; but their heart was not right with Him," Ps. lxxvii. 36.

It is manifest that, if we wish our prayers to be acceptable to God and profitable to ourselves, we must be careful that they flow from a heart, burning with an earnest desire of obtaining from Him those inestimable favours which we ask. We must also pray with all possible attention of mind, using our best endeavours to avoid distracting thoughts in time of prayer, and to keep our mind recollected in the presence of God with Whom we speak. Now the means to be used for this purpose

are: (1.) "Before prayer prepare thy soul, and be not as a man that tempteth God," Ecclus. xviii. 23. This preparation consists in considering beforehand what we are going to do, with Whom we are going to speak, and upon what subject—namely, the concerns of our soul; in calling to mind the presence of God, in directing our intention to God, offering up what we are about to do, purely in obedience to His will, and for His honour and glory, in humbling ourselves before Him, and begging His assistance to enable us to perform that duty as we ought. This will be the best defence against the assaults of our spiritual enemies. (2.) To divest ourselves as much as possible of all solicitude and anxiety about the concerns of this life, to avoid unnecessary employments and vain amusements, and to imprint deeply in the mind and heart a knowledge and love of heavenly things, by frequent reading and meditation on them. This will be the best cure for the infirmity of nature. (3.) In order to preserve a lively sense of the Divine presence during the time of prayer, the moment we observe any distracting thought we must immediately reject it, humbling ourselves before God, and renewing our actual attention to His presence. This will effectually preserve our will from all voluntary consent to whatever distractions may be presented to our mind.

(4.) The fourth condition required to make our prayer efficacious is, that it be humble; that is, void of all trust in ourselves, or in any merits of our own. This is a most essential quality of prayer, and the want of it more than anything else prevents the effect of prayer. It is founded on two great truths, which can never be too deeply impressed upon our mind. The first is, that of ourselves we can do no good towards salvation, neither resist temptation, correct evil habits, avoid sin, acquire any

virtue, persevere in good, nor do anything acceptable in the sight of God. The second truth is, that of ourselves we deserve no help nor grace from Him; nay, that by our manifold sins, ingratitude, and infidelity we deserve only punishment. That, therefore, we must never presume or place dependence on ourselves for obtaining any good, but must expect it only from His goodness and mercy through the merits of our blessed Saviour.

This holy disposition greatly increases the fervour of the soul; for we are never more earnest in desiring any good than when thoroughly convinced of our want of it, and at the same time it powerfully moves God to grant what we desire. This He declares by His prophet: "To whom shall I have respect, but to him that is poor and little, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at My words?" Isa. lxvi. 2. "For thus saith the High and the Eminent, that inhabiteth eternity, and His name is Holy, Who dwelleth in the high and holy place, and with a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite," Isa. lvii. 15. For "a contrite and humble heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise," Ps. l. 19. And therefore "He hath regard to the prayer of the humble, and He hath not despised their petition," Ps. ci. 18. "For the Lord is nigh to them that are of a contrite heart, and He will save the humble of spirit," Ps. xxxiii. 19. But "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble," James, iv. 6. The holy servants of God were most sensible of this truth, and therefore in their prayers recorded in Scripture, especially in times of distress, we find they were all deeply grounded in this holy virtue. Thus Judith says: "Thy power, O God, is not in a multitude, nor is Thy pleasure in the strength of horses, nor from the beginning have the proud been acceptable to

Thee, but the prayer of the humble and meek hath always pleased Thee. . . . Hear me, a poor wretch, making supplication to Thee, and presuming of Thy mercy," Judith, ix. 16. In like manner Esther "covered her head with ashes and dung, and she humbled her body with fasts; . . . and she prayed to the Lord, the God of Israel, saying, O my Lord, Who alone art our King, help me, a desolate woman, who have no other helper but Thee," Esther, xiv. 2. Daniel also, in that fervent prayer which brought an angel from heaven to tell him what he wanted to know, says, "Incline, O my God, Thy ear, and hear; open Thy eyes, and see our desolation; . . . for it is not in our justifications that we present our prayers before Thy face, but for the multitude of Thy tender mercies," Dan. ix. 18. The different effects of the prayers of the humble publican and of the proud pharisee are well known. The prayer of the prodigal son, by which he found favour with his father, was wholly founded in humility. Hence the wise man assures us that "the prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds; and till it come nigh he will not be comforted, and will not depart till the Most High behold: and the Lord will not be slack," Ecclus. xxxv. 21.

The reason that humility is so powerful in finding mercy with God is, that it honours His almighty power. "The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things, and thou shalt find grace before God; for great is the power of God alone, and He is honoured by the humble," Ecclus. iii. 20. Now, though every Christian knows and believes these truths, and on that account may be said to have humility of the understanding, yet such is our unhappy pride that our heart revolts against them. To counteract the fatal

effects of this disposition, it is a most useful practice, not only at the beginning of prayer, but also of every other duty, to make an act of profound humility before God, confessing our inability to do it well without His assistance, and our unworthiness of any help from Him, renouncing all confidence in ourselves, and throwing ourselves entirely upon His mercy for what we need. Experience shows that this is a powerful means of obtaining blessings from God, when it is done sincerely. But we observed in the above examples of the saints, that while they rejected all trust or confidence in themselves, they depended wholly upon the mercy of God; and therefore,

(5.) The fifth quality of prayer is, confidence in God, grounded solely upon His infinite goodness, His fidelity to His promises, and the merits of Jesus Christ. This confidence or hope in God is a virtue which resides partly in the understanding, and partly in the will. *In the understanding;* because we firmly believe that God is disposed and inclined by His own infinite goodness, and has bound Himself by promise, to grant us the good things we ask. *In the will;* because, adhering to this well-founded belief, we hope, without hesitation, that God will grant our demands. Animated with this hope and confidence, we present our petitions with greater fervour of spirit, and with a holy importunity which is pleasing to God. Hence St James says, "If any of you want wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all abundantly, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, which is driven and tossed about by the wind; therefore let not that man think he shall receive anything of the Lord," James, i.

5. Let him ask in *faith;* see the firm belief of the goodness and fidelity of God: *nothing wavering;* see here the unshaken hope and confidence of the will. But as prayer springs from hope, and is the proper exercise of that virtue, see above the admirable effects of prayer, when it rises from a humble heart, and is accompanied with a lively hope, Chap. VIII. sects. 2 and 3, No. 4. We may only further add the example of the good centurion, who, in his prayer for his servant's health, united profound humility with perfect confidence in so admirable a manner as to make Jesus Christ Himself express His surprise, and grant him at the instant what he prayed for, Mat. viii. 8. This shows how agreeable to God is an entire confidence in Him. On the contrary, distrust or diffidence is injurious to His goodness and veracity, by supposing that He is unable or unwilling to perform His repeated promises to grant our requests.

(6.) Another most necessary quality of prayer, and which is the crown of all the former, is perseverance, accompanied with humble resignation to the will of God. Though Almighty God has bound Himself by promise to grant those good things which we ask in prayer that are conducive to our salvation, yet He has not bound Himself to give them at the very moment, nor yet in such manner or measure, as we may ask. God sometimes hears our prayers immediately; at other times He requires to be entreated for days, weeks, months, and years; sometimes He is pleased to grant us at once all we ask; at other times He imparts it by degrees, and as it were insensibly. Sometimes what we ask, though holy and good in itself, may not be the most proper for us in our present dispositions and circumstances. Therefore God in His

mercy is pleased to refuse it, and to reward our prayers with something better or more suitable. In all these circumstances we must be perfectly resigned to whatever God pleases. It is enough to know that all is intended by His infinite wisdom for our greater good, which He alone knows how to promote; and that if we persevere in prayer, sooner or later He will grant us our hearts' desire in the way, manner, and measure that He knows to be best for us. And, indeed, who are we to set a time to the favours of God? When Judith had heard that Ozias, the ruler of the people, had agreed to give up the city to Holofernes, who was besieging it, if within five days God did not relieve them, she said to him and the other rulers, "What is this word by which ye have consented to give up the city to the Assyrians, if within five days there come no aid to us? And who are you that tempt the Lord? This is not a word that may draw down mercy, but rather that may stir up wrath and enkindle indignation. You have set a time for the mercy of the Lord, and you have appointed Him a day according to your pleasure; but forasmuch as the Lord is patient, let us be penitent for this same thing, and with many tears let us beg His pardon, . . . let us humble our souls before Him; and, continuing in an humble spirit in His service, let us ask the Lord with tears that, according to His will, so He would show His mercy towards us," Judith, viii. 10. The high priest Eliachim's behaviour upon this same occasion was very different from that of these rulers; for he "went about all Israel and spoke to them, saying, Know ye that the Lord will hear your prayers if you continue with perseverance in fastings and prayers in the sight of the Lord," Judith, iv. 11.

There is nothing which our blessed Saviour inculcates

more forcibly than perseverance in prayer. The parable of the two friends is expressly intended for that purpose; and He concludes it with these words: "Yet if he shall continue knocking, I say to you, although he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many loaves as he needeth;" and then He immediately adds, "And I say to you, Ask, and it shall be given to you," &c., Luke, xi. 9; thereby showing us that this sacred promise of granting what we ask is principally made to our perseverance in asking. And no wonder that perseverance should at last prevail; for if it could even move the heart of the friend to do what was displeasing, and to grant what was asked, how much more must it move the heart of God, Who is all goodness, Who delights in bestowing His good things upon us, and Who only delays that He may grant them afterwards more to our advantage, and as a reward of our very perseverance? The parable of the unjust judge and the widow was used by our Saviour on purpose to show us "that we ought always to pray, and not to faint," Luke, xviii. 1; that is, to persevere though God should delay; for that coming, He will come at last and grant us all that we desire; and the example of the Chananean woman, with the happy fruits of her perseverance, is recorded for our encouragement and imitation. When she first presented her prayer to our blessed Saviour, He seemed not to regard her, and "answered her not a word." She persisted, and the disciples begged Him to send her away. He even seemed to despise her, saying, "I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel." But she, far from being discouraged, persisted with greater fervour; for "she came and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me." He still seemed unmoved, and said, "It is not good to take

the bread of the children and cast it to the dogs;" but she, not in the least discouraged by this humiliating answer, humbled herself the more, persisted the more, and even from what He said drew an argument in her own favour. True, said she, it is so; I acknowledge myself a wretched creature, and unworthy of being treated as a child, but let me have at least what even the dogs get, "for the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their master." O then, indeed, our Saviour's tender heart could resist no longer. The justice of her petition, the cure of her daughter, who was grievously troubled by a devil, her fervour, humility, confidence, and perseverance were so powerful, that turning unto her He said, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it done to thee as thou wilt; and her daughter was cured from that hour," Mat. xv. 22. What an encouragement is this never to faint, never to be weary, never to cease knocking at the door of the Divine mercy till at last it be opened to us to our great consolation! How does it teach us rather to increase our fervour, humility, and confidence in Him, when He seems not to hear us, with the firm persuasion that perseverance will at last obtain our request! "Do not therefore lose your confidence," says St Paul, "which hath a great reward; for patience is necessary for you, that, doing the will of God, you may receive the promise," Heb. x. 35. When God delays granting what we ask, it is His will that we persevere with confidence and patience, and in His own good time the promised reward will, without doubt, be given us.

When we reflect on our need of the protection of God at all times in everything we do, and on the infallible efficacy of holy prayer in obtaining for us all seasonable aid from Him, we cannot be surprised at the repeated injunctions given in Holy Scripture to continue

without intermission in this holy exercise. See above, Q. 2, No. 2. But we can never sufficiently deplore the coldness, indifference, and dislike of so many to this great duty. May Almighty God open our eyes to see this folly; and may He pour out upon all men the holy spirit of prayer, for in giving them this He will give them by its means all good things.

Q. 9. Is it a duty to pray for others as well as for ourselves?

A. Those who have the charge of others, as pastors, parents, masters of families, &c., are strictly obliged, in justice as well as in charity, to pray for those under their care. And we are all obliged in charity to pray for one another, according to the command of the apostle, "pray for one another, that you may be saved," James, v. 16. For "God gave to every one of them commandment concerning his neighbour," Eccles. xvii. 12. In the gospel we are commanded to love our neighbour as ourselves, and consequently to wish and pray for his salvation as for our own: nay, we are commanded to love our neighbours as Christ loved us, and consequently to pray for their salvation, as Christ prayed for ours. St John goes still farther, and says, "In this we have known the charity of God, because He hath laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for our brethren," 1 John, iii. 16. Namely, if at any time the salvation of their souls should require it; and if so, how much more ought we to pray for their salvation? Now such prayers are most acceptable to God, having the merit of charity added to their own intrinsic value; and if made with proper dispositions, they are most profitable both to those who make them, and to those for whom they are offered. In the histories of the saints we have many examples of the greatest sinners

being converted by means of prayer; witness St Paul by the prayers of St Stephen, and the example of the Chananean woman, by whose prayers her daughter was delivered from the oppression of the devil.

Section II.

Of the Adoration and Worship of God.

Q. 10. What is meant by the adoration or worship of God?

A. The adoration of God properly consists in this, that we, considering on the one hand our own extreme unworthiness and misery, and on the other the infinite majesty of the Divinity, humble and annihilate ourselves in His presence, exalting Him above all things, and abasing ourselves before Him. It contains an act both of the understanding and of the will, of the spirit and of the heart. Hence, to adore God is to acknowledge Him to be a being of infinite majesty and of infinite perfection, and to exalt Him with all our heart, and to humble ourselves as a mere nothing before Him. It is to acknowledge Him to be the Author and Giver of all good, on whom we depend for our very being itself, and everything else, and to abandon ourselves entirely to His Divine Providence with an absolute submission to His will. It is to acknowledge Him as our first beginning and last end, and in consequence to adhere to Him with all the affections of our soul. It is to acknowledge Him as our supreme Lord and Master, Who has absolute dominion over us, and to subject ourselves to Him by perfect obedience to His will in everything. This adoration, then, contains two parts, the submission of the under-

standing and of the heart. By the first we firmly believe that God is what He is, and worship Him in spirit. By the second we surrender Him those affections of our heart and will, and that obedience of our whole being, which are essentially due to Him; which is, to worship or adore Him in truth. It is either internal or external. Internal adoration is the actual exercise in our heart of all these disposition of the soul just mentioned; and its proper acts are exaltation of God, and humiliation of ourselves, submission and dependence. External adoration is testifying outwardly those inward dispositions of the soul; and its acts are praising God by our words, and those actions of the body, which either in themselves, or in the common estimation of mankind, signify humiliation, submission, and dependence on our part, and giving honour and respect to Him; such as kneeling, prostrating, uncovering the head, offering incense, and sacrifice.

Q. 11. Are we obliged to worship and adore God in this manner?

A. It is our bounden duty to do so; we are obliged to it as His creatures; God has an inalienable right to our adoration from His own infinite excellence, and from His supreme dominion over us; and therefore He expressly requires it from us: "The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve," Mat. iv. 10. And "the true adorers shall adore the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father also seeketh such to adore Him. God is a Spirit, and they that adore Him must adore Him in spirit and in truth," John, iv. 23. Let us do our utmost to adore and glorify Him; we can never do enough, nor come in any degree near what He deserves. "We shall say much, and yet shall want words; but the sum of our words is, He is all.

What shall we be able to do to glorify Him, for the Almighty Himself is above all His works? The Lord is terrible and exceeding great, and His power is admirable. Glorify Him as much as ever you can, for He will yet far exceed, and His magnificence is wonderful. Blessing the Lord, exalt Him as much as you can; for He is above all praise. When you exalt Him, put forth all your strength, and be not weary; for you never can go far enough. Who shall see Him and shall declare Him? and who shall magnify Him, as He is from the beginning?" Eccles. xliii. 29.

Q. 12. Are the external acts of adoration above mentioned agreeable and pleasing to God?

A. All external acts of adoration are agreeable to God, only in as far as they proceed from the internal dispositions of the soul, are signs of these dispositions, and accompanied by them. For if we give to Almighty God these external acts of adoration, and do not at the same time give Him the internal worship of the heart, we are only hypocrites and liars, like those unhappy soldiers who "bowed the knees before Jesus Christ, and said, Hail, King of the Jews!" and such lying adoration offends God instead of pleasing Him; for of such He says, "This people honour Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me; in vain they honour Me," Mat. xv. 8. These outward acts are natural signs of the inward adoration of the heart: if the heart be actually in these internal dispositions, which they represent, they are true signs, and therefore agreeable to God; but if the heart be not in these dispositions, they are lying signs, and therefore displeasing to God, Who knows the heart, abhors falsehood, and requires us to adore Him in spirit and in truth.

Q. 13. Are we obliged to give to God external worship and adoration?

A. Most certainly, for several reasons: (1.) The Scripture expressly commands it: "Hear Me, ye divine offspring, and bud forth as the rose planted by the brooks of waters. Give ye a sweet odour as frankincense, send forth flowers as the lily, and yield a smell and bring forth leaves, in grace, and praise, and canticles, and bless the Lord in His works: magnify His name, and give glory to Him with the voice of your lips, and with the canticles of your mouths, and with harps," Ecclus. xxxix. 17. "Come, let us adore, and fall down before God; let us weep before the Lord that made us," Ps. xciv. 6. And through the whole Scripture we find the holy servants of God giving Him this external adoration. Thus, when Esdras read the law to the people, he "blessed the Lord, the great God: and all the people answered, Amen, amen, lifting up their hands: and they bowed down, and adored God with their faces to the ground," 2 Esd. viii. 6. When Job heard all the disasters that had come upon him, he "rose up and rent his garments, and having shaven his head, fell down upon the ground and worshipped," Job, i. 20. So also the wise men from the east, "seeing the star" (that had conducted them to Jesus) "going into the house, found the child with Mary His mother, and falling down they adored Him," Mat. ii. 10. Yea, in heaven itself "the four and twenty ancients fall down before Him that sitteth on the throne, and adore Him that liveth for ever and ever, casting their crowns before the throne," Apoc. iv. 10. (2.) As we are composed of a body and soul, and have received both from God, and were created what we are in order to honour, serve, and adore Him, He has, of course, a full right and

title to the homage both of body and soul, as both are equally His sole property. (3.) External adoration is a natural effect which flows from internal worship; for such is the connection between our soul and body, that when the mind is deeply affected with anything, it naturally makes an impression on the body, and shows itself also there; thus grief and sorrow appear in sobs and tears—joy in a cheerful countenance and laughter; hence also, if the soul be deeply penetrated with the sense of its own unworthiness, and of the greatness of the majesty of God, it must manifest this feeling by outward acts of humility, kneeling, prostrating, and the like. Thus it was with the humble publican in the gospel, with the wise men when they came to our Saviour, and with many others, as we have just seen; so that God, in demanding this outward homage from us, demands nothing but what is the natural result of the inward adoration of the soul, when it is real. Experience also shows that these outward acts of adoration made by the body serve also, in a considerable degree, to strengthen and increase the inward humiliation of the soul, and render our internal homage more fervent. (4.) It contributes also to the honour of God, that we make public profession of worshipping Him, thereby testifying before others our submission to and dependence upon Him. (5.) It is undoubtedly our duty to promote the worship of God among men, and by our example to encourage others to honour Him. (6.) All nations at all times have looked upon it as a duty to give external worship to those whom they considered as gods, which shows that to do so to the Supreme Being is dictated by the very light of nature itself.

Q. 14. Do all those external acts of worship mentioned above, so entirely belong to God that they can be used to none but Him?

A. There are many other beings above us, and in various respects more excellent, both in this world, as magistrates, princes, prelates, and other rulers, also the holy servants of God; and in heaven, the blessed saints and angels. Now reason itself dictates and the word of God commands honour to be given to those who possess any particular excellence. "Render to all men their due; . . . honour to whom honour is due," Rom. xiii. 7. And we see that those who possess any excellence or authority over others, justly expect to be honoured by those beneath them. Masters require this from their servants, parents from their children, and princes from their subjects. This honour we cannot otherwise give than by some outward signs. And as we have not different signs to signify the honour and worship due to God, and that which we give to men—for all the external acts, except sacrifice, have nothing in them to determine one particular kind of worship more than another—these external signs, sacrifice excepted, may be given also to creatures. Nay, we are under the necessity of using them to creatures because we have no other means of honouring them. Hence we find in Scripture itself, not only the outward acts, but also the very words of adoration and worship frequently given to creatures as well as to God. Thus Abraham adored the three angels down to the ground, Gen. xviii. 2. Joshua fell on his face to the ground, and worshipped the angel, Joshua, v. 15. When Abdias met Elias, the great prophet of God, he fell on his face and said, "Art thou my Lord Elias?" 3 Kings, xviii. 7. David, falling on his face to the ground, adored thrice before Jonathan, 1 Sam. xx. 41. Abigail fell before David on her face, and adored upon the ground, 1 Sam. xxv. 23. All David's nobles bowed themselves, and worshipped God, and then the king, 1 Chron. xxix. 20. And even

in common life the poor stretch out their hands to others, asking alms; we uncover the head and bow to one another, to testify mutual respect; we kneel to kiss a king's hand, or to receive a parent's blessing. All this shows that these outward signs do not of themselves signify divine more than any other worship, but only show in general that we honour and reverence the persons to whom we give them in proportion to the excellence we know or believe them to possess. These external acts have nothing definite in themselves; but the kind of worship expressed by them depends upon the internal dispositions of him who uses them, and the particular merits of the person to whom they are given; therefore, when offered to God, they are acts of divine worship; acts of civil worship when given to princes or magistrates, on account of their civil authority and dignity; and when given to holy persons on earth, or to the saints and angels in heaven, they are acts of religious worship, because it is from a motive of religion; it is to honour God for the gifts and graces bestowed on his servants that such external worship is paid. But with sacrifice the case is different; for as this external act of adoration, both in its own nature and in the common judgment of mankind, represents the supreme dominion of God, and our total dependence on Him, it therefore can be offered to none but God alone: and therefore God expressly says, "He that sacrificeth to gods shall be put to death, save only to the Lord," Exod. xxii. 20. See upon this, *Sincere Christian*, Chap. XXIII.

Section III.

Of the Sins against the Virtue of Religion; and first of Idolatry.

Q. 15. What are the sins against the virtues of religion?

A. They are chiefly these three, idolatry, superstition, and sacrilege.

Q. 16. What is idolatry?

A. Idolatry is the giving to any creature that supreme worship and adoration which is due to God alone, whether this be done internally in the heart, or externally by outward actions. It may be divided into three kinds: (1.) Complete idolatry, which is strictly such. (2.) Imperfect idolatry, or superstition; and (3.) Interpretative idolatry. Complete or perfect idolatry is that of the heathens, who internally believe various creatures to be gods, trust in them, pray to them, and offer up in their honour all outward acts of adoration, even sacrifice itself. Whatever they thus honour, is called in the language of the Scripture an idol, "for all the gods of the nations are idols," 1 Chron. xvi. 26. Of these the Scripture says, "They imagined either the fire, or the wind, or the swift air, or the circle of the stars, or the great water, or the sun and moon, to be the gods that rule the world; . . . but unhappy are they, and their hope is among the dead, who have called gods the works of the hands of men, gold and silver, the inventions of art, and the resemblances of beasts, or an unprofitable stone, the work of an ancient hand," Wis. xiii. 2, 10. "But the idol that is made by hands is cursed, as well as he that made it: he, because he made it; and

it, because, being frail, it is called a god. But to God the wicked and his wickedness are hateful alike; for that which is made, together with him that made it, shall suffer torments. Therefore there shall be no respect had even to the idols of the Gentiles; because the creatures of God are turned to an abomination, and a temptation to the souls of men, and a snare to the feet of the unwise," Wis. xiv. 8.

St Paul tells us wherein consists the malice of this sin, "Because they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of the image of a corruptible man, and of four-footed beasts, and of creeping things," Rom. i. 23; that is, they did not give the glory which is due only to the incorruptible God, to Him to whom it belonged, but gave it to creatures. Thus the children of Israel made a golden calf, "and they said, These are thy gods, O Israel, that have brought thee out of the land of Egypt; . . . and rising in the morning, they offered holocausts and peace victims," Exod. xxxii. 4, 6. Of which God thus complains to Moses, "They have made to them a molten calf, and have adored it, and, sacrificing victims to it, have said, These are thy gods," &c., v. 8. And David, speaking of this sin, says, "They made also a calf in Horeb; and they adored the graven thing. And they changed their glory into the likeness of a calf that eateth grass; they forgot the God that saved them," Ps. cv. 19. Now, this is one of the greatest and most abominable sins, and we often find in the Old Testament how hateful it is to God, and what severe judgments it brought upon those who were guilty of it. The people of Israel, from their long stay among the idolatrous Egyptians, and the example of the neighbouring nations, were prone to this crime; and therefore Almighty God, in the first commandment, not only

forbids them in general to have any other god before Him, but also prohibits in express terms this crime of idolatry, saying, "Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, nor of those things that are in the waters under the earth; thou shalt not adore them, nor serve them; I am the Lord thy God," Exod. xx. 4.

Q. 17. Whence did idolatry take its rise?

A. The principal cause of idolatry is, "The old serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, who seduceth the whole world," Apoc. xii. 9. For this haughty spirit, desiring in heaven to place himself upon an equality with God, saying, "I will ascend above the clouds, I will be like to the Most High," Isa. xiv. 14, was for such a detestable attempt banished for ever out of heaven, and condemned to eternal misery; but, untaught by his fall, and still madly ambitious of Divine honour, he endeavoured to procure on earth what he had failed to obtain in heaven. For this end he strove to seduce mankind from their allegiance to God, and to induce them to give to him that worship and adoration which belongs to Almighty God, so that all the creatures and idols which the heathens worshipped were only the visible instruments which Satan made use of to deceive them, because he considered the worship given to these idols as given to himself. Thus, "They sacrificed to devils, and not to God," Deut. xxxii. 17. "For all the gods of the Gentiles are devils," Ps. xcv. 5. And so far did this seduction go, that "They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to devils: and they shed innocent blood; the blood of their sons and their daughters which they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan," Ps. cv. 37. St Paul also declares the same: "What, then? do I

say that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is anything, or that the idol is anything? But the things which the heathens sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God," 1 Cor. x. 19. On this account it is that in Scripture the devil is styled by Jesus Christ Himself the prince of this world, John, xii. 31; and by St Paul, the prince of the power of the air — the spirit that now worketh on the children of unbelief," Ephes. ii. 2; and finally, "The god of this world, who blindeth the mind of unbelievers," 2 Cor. iv. 4. A most affecting account of the various means by which the devil succeeded so far in this seduction of mankind, is given in the thirteenth and two following chapters of the Book of Wisdom, where we are also told that "The worship of abominable idols is the cause, and the beginning, and end of all evil," Wisd. xiv. 27.

Q. 18. Can real idolatry be committed by the external acts, though the person do not believe the idol to be God?

A. When any external act of adoration is given to a creature as if it were God, and with the view of persuading those present that this is done as an acknowledgment of its being God, it is real external idolatry, though the person who does it is aware that the creature to whom he gives this honour is not God. This was the idolatry of those unhappy Christians, who, in times of persecution, bowed themselves down, burned incense, or performed any other such act of worship, before heathen idols, in order to avoid torments; and that which the holy martyrs held in abhorrence, and suffered whatever the rage of their persecutors could inflict rather than commit.

Q. 19. What condemnation of idolatry does the Scripture pronounce?

A. A curse and confusion: "Cursed be the man that maketh a graven or a molten thing, the abomination of the Lord, the work of the hands of artificers, and shall put it into a secret place," Deut. xxvii. 15. "Let them all be confounded that adore graven things, and that glory in their idols," Ps. xcvi. 7. "Let them be greatly confounded that trust in a graven thing;' that say to a molten thing, You are our god," Isa. xlii. 17. See also Isa. xliv. 9, to the end of that chapter, for the vanity of idolatry.

Q. 20. What do you understand by imperfect idolatry?

A. Almighty God, in His unsearchable judgments, permitted Satan, for a time, to seduce mankind in the manner we have seen, by plunging them into idolatry; but at last He was pleased to put a stop to his reign by His Son Jesus Christ, Whom He sent to destroy the works of the devil, and bring man to the knowledge and worship of the true God: "For this purpose the Son of God appeared that He might destroy the works of the devil," 1 John, iii. 8. Accordingly, the first effect of the publication of the gospel of Christ was to destroy this kingdom of Satan, and to deliver mankind from his captivity, and from going "after dumb idols, according as they were led," 1 Cor. xii. 2, and to bring them to the knowledge and service of the living God. Satan, seeing it impossible to maintain his ground, or support his dominion over the hearts of men as before, seeks to secure it in another way, by engaging men to honour and have recourse to him for assistance, notwithstanding the knowledge they now have of the true God, and of Jesus Christ His Son. We are told in Scripture that "the working of Satan," by which he seduces men, is "in all power, and signs, and lying wonders," 2 Thess. ii. 9; that is, by enchantments, sorceries, auguries, divin-

ations, and the like deceits, performed by means of impious men, whom he engages in his service. By these he formerly deluded the great body of mankind, leading them to believe in him as God. By the light of the gospel men now know that he is not God, but the enemy of God and man; and therefore he can no longer persuade them to look upon him as God, and formally worship him as such. Still he seeks to induce them to give him some portion, at least, of that homage which they owe to God alone, to withdraw their confidence from God, and to place it in him, having recourse to him in various necessities, fearing and dreading his power. Thus he engages them in many superstitious practices of his invention, and for his honour and service. This turning away from the living God, and giving part of that homage, which belongs only to Him, to the devil, having recourse to him for help, instead of seeking it from God, trusting in his assistance, fearing his displeasure, and involving ourselves in the detestable ways of superstition, is what is meant by imperfect idolatry.

Q. 21. What is understood by interpretative idolatry?

A. Satan, being unable to induce any number of Christians directly to worship him by these superstitious practices, still seeks to maintain his kingdom among them by other means, by engaging them to place the affections of their hearts upon the riches, pleasures, and honours of this world more than upon God—to trust in and to seek their chief happiness from the enjoyment of them. Thus he engages them in his service, while they transgress the law of the Almighty, and do what is pleasing to the devil, in order to procure or preserve the objects of their affections. Now, though this is not an express formal worship of idols as complete idolatry, nor a direct recourse to Satan for help, as in imperfect

idolatry, yet it is justly considered a species of idolatry, because it is loving the creature more than the Creator, contrary to the great and essential duty of loving God above all things; and therefore the Scripture expressly declares this also to be idolatry, and an idolatry which for ever excludes from heaven. "Know ye this," says St Paul, "and understand, that no fornicator, nor unclean nor covetous person, which is the service of idols, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God," Ephes. v. 5. "Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, lust, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is the service of idols. For which things the wrath of God cometh upon the children of unbelief," Col. iii. 5.

Section IV.

Superstition.

Q. 22. What is superstition?

A. Superstition, in its general acceptation, is the same as imperfect idolatry, which we have explained above, Q. 20. It consists in turning away from the true God, and seeking help from the devil; it is withdrawing one's self from the Providence of God, and from the ordinary means appointed by Him, and having recourse to superstitious practices for obtaining what we wish. They are called superstitious, because they have no natural connection with the end proposed, and have not been appointed by God as supernatural means for obtaining it. Almighty God has ordained two different ways of assisting us in our necessities. One is by na-

tural means; thus, medicines have received from God various natural virtues for restoring health; food is appointed by Him as the natural means to sustain life; prudent examination and consideration to discover the truth; His holy law, and the light of reason, to direct us in our conduct. The other is by supernatural means; thus, prayers, particularly those of the Chuch, applied either immediately, or by means of creatures which she blesses for that purpose, are appointed by God as supernatural means of obtaining many goods, both for soul and body; fasting and alms, of obtaining mercy and light from heaven; the relics of God's saints, now reigning with Him in glory, have often been used by His infinite goodness for like purposes; as also many other pious practices approved by His holy Church, which may be lawfully and laudably used to obtain from His bounty a blessing on our lawful affairs, and other good things we need. But, on the contrary, when we use means to gain our ends which have no natural virtue for procuring them, and are not appointed by God, nor authorised by His Church, as supernatural means for that purpose, all such are superstitious and unlawful, and the more so in proportion to the greater degree of confidence we place in them.

Q. 23. What are the ends people commonly have in view in superstitious practices?

A. Generally speaking, they are unlawful ends, and therefore they have recourse to unlawful means; for when the heart of man is so far perverted as to seek things unlawful, conscious to himself that they are not to be obtained from God, he is easily impelled by his passions to seek them from the devil. The ends men commonly have in view in these things are these following: (1.) To know things hidden, either from a

vain and dangerous curiosity, or from views of interest, as to discover lost goods, concealed treasures, the persons who have stolen from us, or the like. (2.) To know things to come, whether regarding ourselves or others, such as what concerns our good or bad fortune, or the good or bad success of our affairs, that we may regulate our conduct accordingly. (3.) To procure some good to ourselves or others, particularly health, success in our affairs, or the like. (4.) To procure some evil to those whom we deem our enemies, or to raise impure love in other persons, either towards ourselves or others. (5.) To perform things in order to gain applause and esteem, or for other worldly purposes.

Q. 24. Are all equally guilty who follow superstitious practices?

A. No; there are different degrees of guilt; for (1.) some have an express compact with the devil, in which he requires certain conditions on their side, which are always highly dishonourable to God, and destructive to their salvation; and he engages on his part, that, when certain things shall be done, certain words spoken, or observations made, as agreed upon, he will then do what they desire, and produce the effect required. (2.) Others have not this express compact with the devil himself, but only learn the things agreed upon from those who have such; but at the same time they know them to be of the devil's appointment, and that the effect produced is produced by him. Such persons are called in Scripture by the different names of witches, wizards, sorcerers, magicians, soothsayers, fortune-tellers, diviners, charmers, and enchanters. (3.) Others again learn the various means appointed to be used for producing the effect desired, as secrets of nature, hidden mysteries, without knowing expressly of

any prior compact with the devil, though with strong suspicions of their origin. This may be the case with many, to whom the use of the means is handed down through different generations at a considerable time from the original contract, though the memory of the contract itself be lost. And (4.) others, in fine, having heard these things as useful secrets, may use them in their simplicity and ignorance, without any suspicion of the guilt they contain. Now, it is manifest that the degree of guilt is very different in each of these classes.

Q. 25. Are there any people at present in the world who are guilty of this crime?

A. 1. With regard to the two first classes just mentioned, we may observe, (1.) That there have been many such in the world; for the word of God expressly affirms it, gives several examples of such, and makes severe laws against them. (2.) That there may be such in the world at present, because what has been may still be. We read in the New Testament of a young woman "possessed with a pythonical spirit, who brought her masters much gain by divining," Acts, xvi. 16. We read there also of Simon the magician, who "bewitched the people of Samaria by his magical practices," Acts, viii. 11. St Paul even supposes that such may be among Christians, and reckons witchcraft among the works of the flesh, which he orders all Christians to avoid, declaring that those "who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God," Gal. v. 20. And God Himself declared to St John that sorcerers "shall have their portion in the pool burning with fire and brimstone," Apoc. xxi. 8. (3.) That they are not as numerous among Christians as ignorant people commonly imagine; for it is certain that the devil's power is much abridged

wherever the Gospel is received; and Almighty God, speaking of the times of the gospel, says by His prophet, "I will take away sorceries out of the land, and there shall be no divinations in thee," Mich. v. 11; which shows at least that crimes of this kind will be less frequent, and that the devil will not have so much power to delude men by them.

A. 2. But as to those of the two last classes mentioned in the preceding question, it is surprising how many such are to be found in all nations.

Q. 26. What are the several kinds of superstitious practices used by these last?

A. They are of different kinds, according to the different ends proposed. To mention every particular would be endless. We shall therefore notice only a few of the most common.

(1.) In order to know hidden things, or things to come, what numbers of foolish superstitious things are done? Such as casting the white of an egg, or melted lead into water, reading cups, and the like. In these there is not the smallest natural connection between the thing done and the end proposed. God never appointed them as the means of imparting knowledge; therefore, either nothing can be known by them, or, if it be, it is only by means of the devil; and whoever uses them has recourse to him for such knowledge. It is alleged by many that they do these things only for amusement; but what begins in jest may end in earnest; and instances are not wanting of persons who have brought themselves to the conviction that they can foretell what will happen by these means, and that they have had examples of the truth of their predictions; for into all these things the devil easily enters, in punishment of the crime of those who use them, accord-

ing to what God says upon another but similar occasion, "Although the thing should come to pass, thou shalt not hear Him, for the Lord your God trieth you," Deut. xiii. 1. 3.

(2.) Akin to this is pretending to know one's future good or bad fortune, by omens and vain observances, to judge of the success or miscarriage of affairs by them, and to regulate one's actions accordingly. These have no power either of themselves or by Divine appointment to forebode good or evil. How foolish, then, are those who attach importance to them! The Word of God assures us that, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" and "that all things work together for good to them that love God;" and we know that the only thing that can deprive us of His protection, and bring misfortunes upon us, is sin. It is sin alone, then, that we ought to fear.

(3.) Much of the same nature with omens is the observance of lucky and unlucky days, a superstition which comes entirely from the ancient heathens, and appeared among Christians even in the time of the apostles. Thus St Paul writes to the Galatians: "You observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest perhaps I have laboured in vain among you," Gal. iv. 10. He was afraid lest this superstition should deprive them of the benefit of their conversion. We may judge from this how wicked it must be in the sight of God to be influenced by such a slavish fear. Do not all times, days, and seasons equally belong to God? Does He bind Himself to give us His blessing on one day more than on another? Is not His ear always open to the prayer of those that fear Him? Or has He anywhere declared that we must not expect a blessing from Him if we begin any work on certain days? And yet it

is surprising how this superstition tyrannises over the minds of many.

(4.) The observation of dreams is another source of superstitious practices—when a person persuades himself that from his dreams he knows what is to happen, how affairs are to succeed, and upon this regulates his conduct. On this subject, however, we must observe, (1.) That dreams may come from God. He was sometimes pleased to communicate His will to His servants by their means, especially under the old law, when He had not so fully revealed His Divine truths to mankind, as He has done in the gospel. Witness the dreams of Jacob, Laban, Joseph, Pharaoh, Nabuchodonosor, Daniel, the three wise men, St Joseph, &c. And Almighty God says, "If there be among you a prophet of the Lord, I will appear to him in a vision, or I will speak to him in a dream," Num. xii. 6. Of Saul, likewise, we are told that "he consulted the Lord, and He answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by priests, nor by prophets," 1 Sam. xxviii. 6. (2.) That in all these examples, when God did communicate His mind to men by dreams, it always was either to great saints, prophets, or public characters, and in some matter of great importance for the public good; but we do not read that He acted in this manner with ordinary persons, to direct them in the common affairs of life. (3.) On the contrary, lest they should be deluded by the devil to give credit to dreams, He makes an express and general law, that they pay no regard to them: "You shall not divine, nor observe dreams," Lev. xix. 26. "Let there be none among you that observeth dreams, . . . for the Lord abhorreth all these things," Deut. xviii. 10, 12. Nor was there any danger of His orders, given to His servants by dreams, being neglected on ac-

count of this prohibition; because, when He speaks to His servants by dreams, He accompanies them with such circumstances as show, undoubtedly, that they are from Him. The thing proposed is always good, the manner of proposing it clear and distinct, and it leaves the mind in peace, humility, and greater fervour in prayer. (4.) Every one will readily grant that the idle fancies which come into our mind in sleep, from physical causes, or from the ideas which have occupied our mind when awake, can never be a sign of what is to happen. In order to be such sign, our dreams must proceed from some supernatural cause—from God or the devil, a good or bad spirit. Seeing, therefore, that now God seldom or never speaks to men in this manner, and that when He was wont to do so it was only to great persons or saints, and for some important end, and that He expressly forbids all in general to observe dreams, it manifestly follows that it is presumption to imagine that God Almighty or His good angels speak to us by the foolish, confused, and mysterious fancies which come into our mind in sleep. Such dreams, therefore, as seem to present or foretell things to come, whatever impression they may leave upon the imagination, either forebode nothing, or, if they do, it is by means of Satan, who seeks to delude us. Hence the Scripture declares that "Dreams lift up fools. The man that giveth heed to lying visions is like to him that catcheth at a shadow, and followeth after the wind; . . . what truth can come from that which is false? deceitful divinations and lying omens, and the dreams of evil-doers are vanity; . . . for dreams have deceived many, and they have failed that put their trust in them," Ecclus. xxxiv. 1. When the devil sees persons given to idle curiosity, he encourages their vain observances by dreams resembling things which

he foresees will happen. Thus their confidence in them is increased, and God sometimes permits their delusion in punishment of their sin; therefore, though things should happen as foretold by dreams, one ought to give no heed to them; according to the orders of God on another occasion, "Although that should come to pass which they foretell, do not believe them; for the Lord your God trieth you whether you love God with all your heart or not," Deut. xiii. 1.

(5.) To procure health, to obtain some other good, or to prevent evil, what numbers of idle charms and superstitions are often used, such as sowing certain things in the clothes; pronouncing certain words; tying things about some parts of the body; carrying papers about one with certain unknown names and figures written on them. And what particularly shows the malice of Satan is, that he sometimes induces men to use even sacred things in these superstitions. Thus the devil has the pleasure of seeing holy things profaned, and himself honoured by those things which are appointed for the honour of God; whilst deluded men, seeing holy things employed, have less suspicion of the infernal fraud, and therefore are the more easily deceived. Some of these delusions are: Prayers, which are good in themselves, said in a particular posture, and for a certain number of times, as an infallible means to prevent sickness, or to preserve health; certain verses of Scripture, written in a particular form, with other unknown characters, and sewed in one's clothes, as a means to prevent sudden death. The holy mysteries celebrated by a priest of a certain age, with a fixed number of candles on the altar, in order to obtain some bodily favour. In these and similar cases superstition enters into the vain observances, added to what is otherwise good; and because the whole

stress is laid upon these vanities, the whole effect is attributed to them. Strange folly indeed, to be deluded by such things! What inconsistent conduct! The Son of God Himself promises that all the necessaries of life shall be added to us, if we seek first His kingdom, by avoiding sin, and doing good; but Him we will not believe, but go on doing evil and avoiding good. The devil promises worldly advantage if we do something offensive to God, but on that account agreeable to him; and we believe, and with fear and trembling perform what he requires! mistaken mortals!

(6.) But the worst of all is when superstitious means are used to produce harm to others; to bewitch them, to make them fall into disease or poverty; to afflict them with pain, to hurt their cattle, to kill them, to excite them to carnal love, or to inspire them with hatred, &c. All these abominations, besides the detestable superstition they contain, are grievous sins against charity and justice.

Q. 27. What idea does the Scripture give of such superstitious practices?

A. The light in which the Scripture proposes them is contained under these following heads: (1.) It prohibits them as abominations: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," Exod. xxii. 18. "A man or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or is a wizard, dying let them die; they shall stone them, and their blood shall be upon them," Lev. xx. 27. "Beware lest thou have a mind to imitate the abominations of those nations; neither let there be found among you any one . . . that consulteth soothsayers, or observeth dreams and omens; neither let there be any wizard, nor charmer, nor any one that consulteth pythonic spirits, or fortune-tellers, or that seeketh the truth from the dead. For the Lord abhorreth all these

things, and for these abominations He will destroy them at His coming," Deut. xviii. 9. See above, Q. 25, No. 2. (2.) It strictly forbids all communication with those who use such practices: "Go not aside after wizards, neither ask anything of soothsayers, to be defiled by them, I am the Lord your God," Lev. xix. 31. "The soul that shall go aside after magicians and soothsayers, and shall commit fornication with them, I will set My face against that soul, and destroy it out of the midst of its people," Lev. xx. 6. (3.) It shows us several examples of the punishment God sends upon all such. Thus when Ochozias king of Israel fell sick, he sent to consult a heathen idol about his health, but Elias the prophet came to him in the name of God and said, "Thus said the Lord, Because thou hast sent messengers to consult Beelzebub, the God of Accaron, as though there were not a God in Israel, of whom thou mightest inquire the word, therefore, from the bed on which thou art gone up thou shalt not come down, but thou shalt surely die. So he died accordingly," 4 Kings, i. 16. And, indeed, those who use superstitious means for recovering health either reap no benefit from them, or if they recover, some greater evil befalls them. Of the people of Israel we are told that in the reign of Osee "they gave themselves to divinations and soothsayings; and they delivered themselves to do evil before the Lord to provoke Him. And the Lord was very angry with Israel, and He removed them out of His sight," 4 Kings, xvii. 17: that is, these sins filled up their cup of iniquity, and were the cause of the dispersion and utter destruction of the ten tribes. Of Manasses also, the king of Juda, we are told that "He used divination, and observed omens, and appointed pythons, and multiplied soothsayers, to do evil in the

sight of the Lord, and to provoke Him; . . . therefore thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring evils on Jerusalem and Juda, that whosoever shall hear of them both his ears shall tingle," 4 Kings, xxi. 6, 12. "And I will deliver them into the hands of their enemies, and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies," ver. 14. (4.) It shows us the folly of trusting to these things. "Stand now," says Almighty God, "with thy enchanters, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, in which thou hast laboured from thy youth, if so be it may profit thee anything, or if thou mayest become stronger. Thou hast failed in the multitude of thy counsels: let now the astrologers stand and save thee; they that gazed at the stars and counted the months, that from them they might tell the things that should come to thee; behold, they are as stubble—fire hath burnt them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flames; there are no coals wherewith they may be warmed, nor fire that they sit thereat. Such are all the things become to thee in which thou hast laboured," Isa. xlvii. 12. (5.) It commands us to have no communication with them, nor to fear them, but to have recourse to God. Besides the prohibitions above related, St Paul says, "I would not that you should be made partakers with devils. You cannot drink the chalice of the Lord, and the chalice of devils: you cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord, and of the table of devils," 1 Cor. x. 20. Wherefore, "Thus saith the Lord, Learn not according to the ways of the gentiles, and be not afraid of the signs of heaven which the heathens fear, . . . they shall be proved together to be senseless and foolish: a stock is the doctrine of their vanity; . . . they are vain things, and a ridiculous work; by the time of their visitation they shall perish," Jer. x. 2, 8, 15.

But "there is none like to Thee, O Lord; Thou art great, and great is Thy name in might: who shall not fear Thee, O King of nations?" Jer. x. 6. And therefore, "When they shall say to you, Seek of pythons and of diviners, who mutter in their enchantments; should not the people seek of their God, for the living of the dead?" Isa. viii. 19.

Q. 28. Has the devil power to hurt people by means of those who use enchantments and sorceries?

A. In answer to this several things must be observed. (1.) That the devils, if permitted, have great power and strength to do many things in the material creation. They turned the rods into serpents by the enchantment of the Egyptian magicians; and the waters into blood, Exod. vii., and brought up frogs, Exod. viii. They destroyed Job's cattle and servants by thunder and lightning, and caused the house to fall on his children by a strong wind; and St Paul calls them the princes of the power of the air, Eph. ii. 2. They smote Job with sore boils, Job, ii., which shows what power they have to hurt the human body; also our Saviour declared that it was the devil who had kept the crooked woman bound for eighteen years, Luke, xiii. And an angel of Satan was given St Paul to buffet him, 2 Cor. xii. 7. And of those whom they possessed, some they made dumb, some deaf, and some they threw into fits. An evil spirit from the Lord afflicted Saul in his mind: Satan hindered St Paul from going to the Thessalonians, when he intended, 1 Thess. ii. 18. A devil killed Sarah's seven husbands, Tob. iii.: and a legion of his angels destroyed the herd of swine in the sea. (2.) The devil's will to do evil to man is no less than his power; for, "by the envy of the devil death entered into the world," Wisd. ii. 24. Our Saviour declares "he was a

murderer from the beginning," John, viii. 44. And St Peter assures us "that he is continually going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour," 1 Pet. v. 8. (3.) Notwithstanding, he can never do the smallest harm to any creature but in as far as he is commissioned or permitted by God. Thus the magicians of Egypt could not bring up lice, but were obliged to confess that the finger of God was there: neither could Satan go one iota farther in injuring Job than his permission bore, nor could the legion go into the swine without leave from our blessed Saviour, nor could they hurt Tobias, Sarah's eighth husband. (4.) God sometimes permits them to use their power to the injury of men or other creatures, as the above examples show, and even commissions them to execute His just judgment against sinful men, according to that of David, "He sent upon them the wrath of His indignation; indignation and wrath and trouble, which He sent upon them by evil angels," Ps. lxxvii. 49. Nay, they are the "spirits that are created for vengeance, and in their fury they inflict grievous torments; and in the time of destruction they shall pour out all their force, and they shall appease the wrath of Him that made them," Eccl. xxxix. 33. (5.) Our sins are the chief causes which move God to give them such power against men. By these we become enemies of God and objects of His wrath, and the devil acquires a right over us as his slaves; by them we deserve punishment, and it is the devil's business to punish. But of all sins these following most frequently subject men to the power of Satan:—*Lust*, for thus the angel Raphael said to Tobias: "Hear me, and I will show thee who they are over whom the devil can prevail: For they who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lusts, as the horse and the

mule, which have not understanding, over them the devil hath power," Tob. vi. 16. Now if over those who enter into the married state in these dispositions the devil hath power, how much more must he have it over those who abandon themselves to unlawful lust? *Pride*, of which we are told that the devil "is king over all the children of pride," Job, xli. 25. And when St Paul had been taken up to the third heavens, and heard things unutterable, an angel of Satan was given to buffet him, lest he should fall into pride from these high revelations. Lastly, those who are given to *discord and dissension*, which is properly the sin of the devil, for "an evil man always seeketh quarrels; but a cruel angel shall be sent against him," Prov. xvii. 11.

Q. 29. What consequences flow from these truths?

A. (1.) That the surest way to prevent the devil from hurting us, either himself or by his agents, is to avoid sin, and live in the friendship of God, for "if God be with us, who is against us?" Rom. viii. 31. But if at any time God should permit the devil to inflict evil on any of His servants, as was the case with Job, it is only for their trial, and He will turn to their greater good. (2.) That we ought never to be afraid of the machinations of the devil or his agents, but to place entire confidence in God; for the Scripture says, "He that dwelleth in the aid of the Most High, shall abide under the protection of the God of Jacob; . . . thou shalt not be afraid of the terror of the night; of the arrow that flieth in the day; of the pestilence that walketh about in the dark; of the invasion, or of the noonday devil," Ps. xc. 1, 5. (3.) That all the enchantments, charms, and superstitious practices, which may be used against us can never harm us if we continue faithful to our God, and have a firm confidence in Him. (4.) That we

ought only to fear sin, but not the devil. (5.) That if at any time a person, in punishment of his sins or for God's wise ends, should be afflicted by any effects of sorcery, he ought never to use, nor permit others to use, counter-enchantments for his relief; this would be a heinous crime, flying to the devil for aid, and would only give the devil more power over him. (6.) That he ought to fly only to God by sincere repentance, by prayer and fasting, which Christ Himself assures us is so necessary for overcoming the devils, that some kinds of them cannot be cast out by any other means, Mark, ix. 28. Particularly he ought to have recourse to the prayers of the Church, to whom Christ has given power and authority over all diabolical machinations, saying to His apostles, "These signs shall follow them that believe, in My name they shall cast out devils," Mark, xvi. 17. This power He gives to the pastors of the Church in a particular manner, in the persons of the apostles; for "He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out," Mat. x. 1; and "He gave them power to cast out devils," Mark, iii. 15; and "He gave them power over unclean spirits," Mark, vi. 7; and "He gave them power and authority over all devils," Luke, ix. 1. This power these first pastors of the Church used, as we find in the Acts of the Apostles; and their successors, walking in their footsteps, and confiding in that original charter granted them by Jesus Christ, have continued, as occasion required, to exert this power over unclean spirits and their machinations, to the comfort of those distressed by them, to the glory of God, and the exaltation of the true faith of His Son Jesus.

Section V.

Of Sacrilege.

Q. 30. What is sacrilege?

A. Sacrilege is an abuse or profanation of holy things. By holy things is understood, whatever is dedicated, or set apart, to be employed in the service of God. They are divided into three classes; *holy persons*, who are holy by the sacred character they bear, and are deputed to the service of God and His Church, as ecclesiastics and religious. *Holy things*, which are the sacraments, the sacred vessels, and sacred ornaments, employed in the worship of God; the goods dedicated to the maintenance of His ministers, and to the necessities of His churches; the holy oils, and other things specially blessed by the Church for God's honour and service. *Holy places*, which are churches, chapels, cemeteries, monasteries, and other religious houses, set apart for God's service. By the abuse or profanation of these things is meant, when any irreverence or contempt is shown to them, either in the thing done or the manner of doing it, or by using them for profane and worldly purposes. These purposes may be actions otherwise lawful in themselves, as when sacred vessels are used to drink out of in profane banqueting; or unlawful and criminal, as when holy things are used for superstitious practices.

Q. 31. How is this profanation understood to be committed in regard to each of the three classes of holy things?

A. (1.) With regard to holy persons; it is committed by striking them, which is an irreverence to their sacred

character, and by committing sins of impurity with such as are consecrated to God by vows of chastity. (2.) With regard to holy things; profanation may be committed in different ways; as by the unworthy administration or reception of the sacraments; keeping the Holy Eucharist without becoming decency, or reserving it too long, so as to alter the species; taking the chrism, or holy oils, for any profane use; touching the consecrated vessels without permission or necessity; employing them, and the sacred ornaments, for worldly and common uses; showing any irreverence to the Holy Scriptures, or to holy images and relics, as throwing them on the ground in contempt, trampling them under foot, or the like; selling holy things as such—that is, selling them at more than their material value, on account of being consecrated; making use of the words of the Holy Scripture for superstitious purposes; robbing or stealing Church goods, destined to the service of God and the maintenance of His ministers, seizing them by force, or refusing to pay them according to the destination of the donors. (3.) As to churches, and other holy places, they are sacrilegiously profaned when they are pillaged, burnt, or destroyed; when actions are done in them contrary to the worship of God, for which they are destined; when they are turned to profane uses, as trading, gaming, drinking, or other worldly purposes.

Q. 32. On what is the respect due to holy things grounded?

A. On the connection which they have with God, who is jealous of His honour, and of the respect due to everything that belongs to Him. Where there is a true spirit of religion and piety towards God, this will necessarily show itself in a just respect and veneration for all

sacred persons and things, which have a near connection with Him; and where this respect and veneration are wanting, it is clear proof that piety and religion are declining. Hence, we find that God Almighty commands us to pay the greatest reverence and regard to everything that belongs to Him, and severely punishes those who fail in doing so.

1. With regard to sacred persons, He says, "Take heed thou forsake not the Levite all the time that thou livest in the land," Deut. xii. 19. "And the Levite that is within thy gates, beware thou forsake him not," Deut. xiv. 27. And why so? Because "God separated the tribe of Levi, to carry the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and to stand before Him in the ministry, and to bless in His name," Deut. x. 8; "To bear the iniquity of the people, and pray for them in the sight of the Lord," Lev. x. 17. And hence Michas, when the young Levite came and agreed to stay with him as his priest, said, "Now I know God will do me good since I have a priest of the race of the Levites," Judges, xvii. 13. Again, Almighty God says by His prophet David, "Touch not My anointed, and do no evil to My prophets," Ps. civ. 15. And by the mouth of the wise man the Holy Ghost speaks thus: "With all thy soul fear the Lord, and reverence His priests. With all thy strength love Him that made thee, and forsake not His ministers. Honour God with all thy soul, and give honour to the priests; . . . give them their portion as is commanded thee," Ecclus. vii. 31. Where we see the fear, love, and honour of God immediately followed by the respect due to His ministers, as things naturally and necessarily connected.

St Paul also is plain on this point; for when he sent Epaphroditus, his fellow-labourer, to the Philippians, he

said, "Receive him with all the joy in the Lord, and treat with honour such as he is," Phil. ii. 29. And in another epistle he says, "We beseech you, brethren, to know them who labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; that you esteem them more abundantly in charity for their work's sake; have peace with them," 1 Thess. v. 12. "Let the priests that rule well be esteemed worthy of double honour, especially those that labour in the Word and in doctrine," 1 Tim. v. 17. Let us now see how those who fail in this are punished: "Mary and Aaron spoke against Moses; . . . and said, Hath the Lord spoken by Moses only? hath He not also spoken to us in like manner? And when the Lord heard this, immediately . . . He called upon them all three and said, Hear My words: If there be among you a prophet of the Lord, I will appear to him in a vision, or I will speak to him in a dream; but it is not so with My servant Moses, who is most faithful in all My house; for I speak to him mouth to mouth, and plainly, and not by riddles and figures doth he see the Lord. Why, then, were ye not afraid to speak ill of My servant Moses? And being angry with them, He went away; the cloud also that was over the tabernacle departed, and behold Mary appeared white as snow with a leprosy," Num. xii. 1, from which she was not cured till after seven days by the prayers of Moses. The wife of a Levite is inhumanly abused by some of the tribe of Benjamin (see Judges, xix.)—war was raised against that tribe, in which no less than twenty-five thousand valiant men were killed, and their city burned; and "All the cities and villages of Benjamin were consumed with devouring flames," Judges, xx.

Jeroboam king of Israel "stretched forth his hand

from the altar against a prophet, saying, Lay hold on him; and his hand which he stretched forth against him withered, and he was not able to draw it back again to him," 3 Kings, xiii. 4. Zacharias, the son of Joiada the priest, reproving King Joas for his impiety, the king's servants "gathered themselves together against him, and stoned him at the king's command in the court of the house of the Lord. . . . And when he was dying, he said, The Lord see and requite it. And when a year was come about, the army of Syria came up against Joas, and they came to Juda and Jerusalem, and they killed all the princes of the people, and they sent all the spoils to the king of Damascus; and whereas there came a very small number of the Syrians, the Lord delivered into their hands an infinite multitude, because they had forsaken the Lord, the God of their fathers. And on Joas they executed shameful judgments; and departing, they left him in great diseases. And his servants rose up against him for revenge of the blood of the son of Joiada the priest, and they slew him in his bed, and he died," 2 Chron. xxiv. 20.

2. As to sacred vessels and other things dedicated to the service of God, it is amazing what respect and veneration He required to be shown to them. He would allow none but the high priest to enter into the holy of holies, and that only once in the year after many sacrifices and ceremonies of purification, Lev. xvi.: where God says to Moses, "Speak to Aaron thy brother, that he enter not at all into the sanctuary, which is within the veil before the propitiatory, with which the ark is covered, lest he die, unless he first do these things," ver. 2; and then gives orders what he was to do, and ends the chapter in these words: "And this shall be an ordinance for ever, . . . once in a year," ver. 34. He allowed

none but the sons of Moses and Aaron the priest to have the custody of the sanctuary, and ordained that "what stranger soever cometh into it shall be put to death," Num. iii. 38. He permitted none but Aaron and his sons to touch the ark and the sacred vessels; and when they were going to set forward on a journey, allowed none but them to cover up the ark and the sacred vessels with their proper coverings, and then deliver them to the Levites who were appointed to carry, but expressly forbidden to touch them: "They shall not touch the vessels of the sanctuary, lest they die," Num. iv. 15. And He says to Aaron, "Thou and thy sons shall minister in the tabernacle of the testimony, and the Levites shall watch to do thy commands, and about all the works of the tabernacle, only they shall not come nigh the vessels of the sanctuary, nor the altar, lest both they die, and you also perish with them," Num. xviii. 2. Nay, He would not allow any others than the priests to look at the holy vessels: "Let not others by any curiosity see the things that are in the sanctuary before they be wrapped up, otherwise they shall die," Num. iv. 20. He also strictly ordained that the tithes and offerings which He appointed for the maintenance of His priests and the service of the altar should be punctually paid; and declares by His prophet Malachy that the withdrawing of any part of that was an afflicting of God Himself. "Shall a man afflict God? says He, for you afflict Me. And you have said, Wherein do we afflict Thee? In tithes and first-fruits. And you are accursed with want, and you afflict Me, even the whole nation of you," Mal. iii. 8.

See how He punishes transgressions against these duties. (1.) At the taking of Jericho, God commanded, that "whatsoever gold or silver should be found there,

or vessels of brass and iron, should be consecrated to the Lord, and laid up in His treasures;" and all the people were forbid to touch any of these things, Jos. vi. 19. But Achan, of the tribe of Judah, "saw among the spoils a scarlet garment, exceeding good, and two hundred sicles of silver, and a golden rule of fifty sicles, and he coveted them, and he took them away," Jos. vii. 21. This sacrilegious robbery brought a curse upon the whole people, for in the next battle they were defeated and lost a number of men; and when the crime was discovered, Achan, with his stolen goods, his children, his cattle, and all his goods, were brought to a valley, and there he was stoned, and they burned all that belonged to him, and consumed them with fire, Jos. viii. 24. (2.) The Philistines, in a victory gained over the Israelites, took the ark and carried it away in triumph, placing it in the temple of their idol Dagon; but next morning the idol was fallen and broken to pieces before the ark, and "the hand of the Lord was heavy upon them, and He destroyed them, and afflicted them with emrods. And in their villages and fields there came forth a multitude of mice, and there was the confusion of a great mortality in the city; . . . and there was the fear of death in every city, and the hand of God was exceedingly heavy. The men also that did not die were afflicted with emrods, and the cry of every city went up to heaven," 1 Kings, v. 6, 12. So that they were forced to send back the ark to its own place. (3.) The first place the ark came to on its return was the country of the Bethsamites. These were glad indeed to see the ark, but, out of a sacrilegious curiosity, they had the presumption to open and look into it; for which crime God slew them with a very great slaughter, to the number of seventy of their principal

men, and fifty thousand of their common people, 1 Kings, vi. 19. (4.) When David was bringing the ark in procession to its place, "Oza put forth his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, because the oxen kicked and made it lean aside. And the indignation of the Lord was kindled against Oza, and He struck him for his rashness, and he died before the ark of God," 2 Kings, vi. 6. (5.) Two hundred and fifty of the leading men, but who were not priests, took upon them to offer incense, in two hundred and fifty censers, "and a fire coming out from the Lord, destroyed them all," Num. xvi. 35. (6.) Ozias the king, elated with his victories, "neglected the Lord his God, and going into the temple of the Lord, he had a mind to burn incense upon the altar of incense." The priests opposed him, as their duty required, but "Ozias, angry, and holding in his hand the censer to burn incense, threatened the priests. And presently there arose a leprosy in his forehead, . . . and they made haste to thrust him out. Yea, he himself, being also frightened, hasted to go out, because he had quickly felt the stroke of the Lord. And Ozias the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and he dwelt in a house apart, being full of the leprosy," 2 Chron. xxvi. 16. (7.) Baltassar, king of Babylon, made a great feast, and in his revelry commanded the sacred vessels which his father Nabuchodonosor had carried away from the temple of Jerusalem, to be brought, that his wives and nobles might drink out of them; but immediately the figure of a hand appeared, writing his condemnation upon the wall; upon which the prophet Daniel, being called to interpret the writing, spoke thus to the king, "Thou hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven, and the vessels of His house have been brought before thee, and thou, and thy nobles, and thy wives, and thy

concubines have drank wine in them, and thou hast praised the gods of silver and gold, . . . which neither see, nor hear, nor feel, but the God Who hath thy breath in His hand, and all thy ways, thou hast not glorified. Wherefore, He hath sent the part of the hand which hath written that which is set down," Dan. v. 23. Then he interpreted the writing, which was, that his days were ended, his kingdom divided and given to the Medes and Persians; and this sentence was immediately accomplished, for "that same night Baltassar, the Chaldean king, was slain, and Darius the Mede succeeded to his kingdom," ver. 30.

3. We come now to holy places, or churches dedicated to the service of God, and sanctified by His presence. How holy such places are, and how much God requires them to be reverenced and respected, appears from many declarations of Scripture. When Moses approached to see the burning bush, the Lord, Who was present in the bush, said to him, "Come not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground," Exod. iii. 5. When Josuah met the angel in the field, he "fell on his face to the ground and worshipped; and the angel said, Loose thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy," Jos. v. 15, 16. "Moses and Aaron, and his sons, washed their hands and their feet when they went into the tabernacle of the covenant, and went to the altar as the Lord had commanded Moses," Exod. xl. 29, 30. And this command is thus expressed; "Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and feet when they are going into the tabernacle of the testimony, and when they are to come to the altar, to offer on it incense to the Lord, lest perhaps they die; it shall be an everlasting law to him, and his seed by successions," Exod. xxx. 19. And how

great was the respect that God commanded to be paid to His sanctuary! "Reverence My sanctuary," says He; "I am the Lord," Lev. xix. 30. He would not allow the high priest to go near any dead person, not even his father or mother, lest he should be defiled. "Neither shall he go out of the holy place, lest he defile the sanctuary of the Lord, because the oil of the holy unction of his God is upon him," Lev. xxi. 11. If any of the priests had a blemish, He commanded that "he enter not within the veil, nor approach to the altar, because he hath a blemish, and he must not defile My sanctuary; I am the Lord Who sanctify them," Lev. xxi. 23. He would not allow any of the people to approach His sanctuary, but said, "I have taken the Levites, and have delivered them for a gift to Aaron and his sons (who are the priests), to serve Me for Israel in the tabernacle of the covenant, and to pray for them, lest there should be a plague among the people, if they should presume to approach to My sanctuary," Num. viii. 18. When Jacob the patriarch had the vision of the ladder reaching to heaven, and "awaked out of his sleep, he said, Indeed the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. And trembling he said, How terrible is this place! This is no other but the house of God, and the gate of heaven," Gen. xxviii. 16. Hence David says, "Holiness becometh Thy house, O Lord, unto length of days," Ps. xcii. 5. And the wise man advises thus, "Keep thy foot when thou goest into the house of God, and draw nigh to hear," Eccles. iv. 17. God Himself thus threatens those that defile His temple, "And I will visit in that day upon every one that entereth arrogantly over the threshold, them that fill the house of the Lord their God with iniquity and deceit," Soph. i. 9. St Paul confirms the same; "If any man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy," 1 Cor. iii. 17.

Of the execution of those threats we have several striking examples: (1.) Nadab and Abiu, though priests and sons of Aaron, were destroyed because they polluted the sanctuary, by offering the incense with unhallowed fire, "a fire coming out from the Lord destroyed them, and they died before the Lord," Lev. x. 1. (2.) The profanation of the temple of God is declared to be one of the chief causes of the destruction of it, and of the Babylonish captivity; for thus speaks Almighty God Himself to His prophet Jeremiah: "Is this house then, in which My name hath been called upon, in your eyes become a den of robbers? I am He: I have seen it, saith the Lord. Go ye to my place in Silo, where My name dwelt from the beginning, and see what I did to it, for the wickedness of My people Israel: and now because you have done all these works, . . . I will do to this house in which My name is called upon, and in which you trust, and to the place which I have given to you and your fathers, as I did to Silo. And I will cast you away from before My face, as I have cast away all your brethren, the whole seed of Ephraim. Therefore do not thou pray for this people, . . . for I will not hear thee," Jer. vii. 11. (3.) The destruction and profanation of the temple by the Babylonians was the cause of their ruin, and of the miseries that befell them when conquered by the Medes: "Flee ye from the midst of Babylon," says the prophet, "and let every one save his own life. . . . The Lord hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes; and His mind is against Babylon to destroy it, because it is the vengeance of the Lord, the vengeance of His temple," Jer. li. 6, 11. (4.) King Antiochus, resolving to bring over the Jews to his pagan rites, defiled the temple of God, and filled it with riot and revellings, and began to persecute the Jews; and from that time his

affairs declined, his armies were overthrown, his cities taken, and himself, returning from an unlucky expedition into Persia, "the Lord, the God of Israel, that seeth all things, struck with an incurable and invisible plague, . . . a dreadful pain in his bowels came upon him, and bitter torments of the inner parts, . . . worms swarmed out of his body; and while he lived in sorrow and pain, his flesh fell off, and the filthiness of his smell was noisome to the army, and no man could endure to carry him for his intolerable stench," 2 Mac. ix. He now began to enter into himself, and remember the evils he had done at Jerusalem, and attributed all his misery to that cause, 1 Mac. vi. 12. Then he promised to repair all damages, and "The holy temple also, which he had before spoiled, he promised to adorn with goodly gifts, and to multiply the holy vessels, and to allow out of his revenues the charges pertaining to the sacrifices," 2 Mac. ix. 16. But all to no purpose; Almighty God would not accept these offers from his sacrilegious hands, and "he died a miserable death, in a strange country, among the mountains," ver. 28. (5.) When Heliodorus came to Jerusalem to rob the temple, and would not be persuaded to desist by what Onias the high priest said to him, all the people with Onias, had recourse to God for help; and God was not wanting to avenge the sanctity of that place; for "all those of Heliodorus' men who presumed to obey him, falling down by the power of God, were struck with fainting and dread. For there appeared to them a horse, with a terrible rider upon him, adorned with a very rich covering; and he ran fiercely and struck Heliodorus with his fore-feet; and he that sat upon him seemed to have armour of gold. Moreover, there appeared two other young men, beautiful and strong, bright and glorious and in comely apparel, who stood by him on either side,

and scourged him without ceasing with many stripes. And Heliodorus suddenly fell to the ground, . . . and by the power of God lay speechless, and without all hope of recovery," 2 Mac. iii. 23, till he afterwards recovered by the prayers of Onias the high priest.

(6.) Other examples of sacrilege and its punishments are found in the same book, as of Lysimachus, 2 Mac. iv. 39, 43; of Calisthenes, 2 Mac. vii. 33; and particularly of Menelaus, who stole holy vessels of gold out of the temple, and sold them, and by his briberies had once escaped the just judgment of his deed, 2 Mac. iv. 32, 43. But at last, "The King of kings stirred up the mind of Antiochus against this wicked man, . . . as the cause of all the evils. And there was in that place a tower fifty cubits high, having a heap of ashes on every side; this had a prospect steep down. From thence he commanded the sacrilegious wretch to be thrown down into the ashes; . . . for as he had committed many sins against the altar of God, the fire and ashes of which were holy, he was condemned to die in ashes," 2 Mac. xiii. 4. (7.) It is particularly to be remembered that our blessed Lord Himself, though He bore all His own sufferings with meekness, yet showed the utmost zeal when He saw the temple profaned. He reproved the world indeed for many sins, but He would punish with His own hands none but sacrilege; He refused to be judge in parting the inheritance between the two brothers, or in the case of the woman taken in adultery; but when He saw the temple of God profaned, He took upon Himself immediately to be both accuser, judge, and executioner; and this He did two different times; once at the beginning of His ministry, "When He went up to Jerusalem, after the marriage of Cana in Galilee; and He found in the temple them that sold oxen, and

sheep, and doves, and the changers of money sitting. And when He had made, as it were, a scourge of little cords, He drove them all out of the temple, the sheep also, and the oxen, and He poured out the changers' money, and the tables He overthrew. And he said to them that sold doves, Take these things hence, and make not the house of My Father 'a house of traffic," John, ii. 13. He did the same a second time, on His triumphant entrance into Jerusalem before His passion, and said upon that occasion, "It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer; but you have made it a den of thieves," Mat. xxi. 13. (8.) Finally, St Paul assures us that sacrilegious and unworthy communions not only bring ruin and condemnation upon the soul, but also many sufferings and untimely death in this world; for "therefore," says he, "are there many infirm and weak among you, and many sleep," 1 Cor. xi. 30. Of which the unhappy Judas is a striking example.

Q. 33. Why is all irreverent behaviour in churches so offensive to God?

A. For two weighty reasons; (1.) because the church is the house of God; that is, though God be everywhere present, He has no need of a house made with hands, Acts, xvii. 24; and consequently we may worship and adore Him in all places; yet as in other places we transact worldly affairs, He is pleased to have certain places exclusively set apart for His worship. Besides, God is present everywhere, but in a different character in heaven, on earth, and in hell. Even on earth itself, He is everywhere present as the sovereign ruler of all things, whether concerning soul or body; but He requires His churches, where He resides, to be set apart to treat with us of the concerns of our souls, and of them alone. Lastly, though God be present everywhere, yet our corruption

of heart would soon lead us to forget Him, did not some outward monitor recall the thought of His presence. This is done by His churches, which, being appointed only for His service, remind us of Him who dwells there. For these reasons, God Almighty makes choice of our churches as His houses, and is pleased to be in them in a particular manner. Hence, when Solomon had finished the temple he said, "The Lord promised that He would dwell in a cloud; but I have built a house to His name, that He might dwell there for ever," 2 Chron. vi. 1. And when he had ended his prayer of dedication, "fire came down from heaven and consumed the holocausts, and the victims, and the majesty of the Lord filled the house," 2 Chron. vii. 1. And the night following God appeared to Solomon, and said, "I have heard thy prayer, and I have chosen this place to Myself for a house of sacrifice; . . . for I have chosen and have sanctified this place, that My name may be there for ever, and My eyes and My heart may remain there perpetually," ver. 12. And our Saviour Himself declares, "Where there are two or three gathered together in My name, there I am in the midst of them," Mat. xviii. 20. The very end for which churches are raised is, not that two or three, but the whole Christian people may meet in them, in the name of Jesus Christ, and adore Him.

(2.) Because the Church is the house of prayer: "My house shall be called the house of prayer for all nations," Isa. lvi. 7. For though God is present to hear our prayers in all places, yet as in other places we treat of our worldly affairs, as well as pray to God, therefore He wills that the Church should be set apart for prayer alone, and that no worldly business be transacted there. Besides, though God hears our prayers in all places,

yet He is more ready to grant what we ask in the church than elsewhere, as He declared to Solomon at the dedication of the temple, "My eyes also shall be open, and My ears attentive to the prayer of him that shall pray in this place," 2 Chron. vii. 15. And Jesus Christ says, "Again I say to you, that if two of you shall agree upon earth concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done for them by My Father Who is in heaven," Mat. xviii. 19. It is in the house of prayer where many meet to present their joint petitions to Heaven; and we see the effect of them in St Peter's delivery out of prison, Acts, xii. David well knew this truth when he said, "We have received Thy mercy, O Lord, in the midst of Thy temple," Ps. xlvii. 10. And God says by Isaias, "I will bring them into My holy mount, and I will make them joyful in My house of prayer, and their victims shall please Me upon My altar; for My house shall be called the house of prayer for all nations," Isa. lvi. 7. Hence, Daniel in his captivity opened his window towards Jerusalem three times a-day, and prayed with his face towards the temple of God when unable to go there in person. Lastly, in other places the sins and wickedness everywhere committed are a hindrance to the efficacy of our prayers, and therefore Almighty God would have holy places set apart into which no sin ought to enter, that our prayers offered there, being more pleasing to Him, may be more beneficial to our souls.

From this it is easy to see how great an abuse it is of the Church of God, how disrespectful, and consequently how displeasing to God to employ one's self in the church in worldly affairs, in gazing about, in conversing with others; in a word, in doing anything but speaking to God by prayer and praise, in listening to His inspirations, or in

hearing Him speak to us by the mouth of His ministers. "Have you not houses of your own to eat and drink," says St Paul, "and do you despise the church of God?" 1 Cor. xi. Have you not all other places for your worldly affairs?—will you not keep even the house of God free from them? "Will you set scandals in the house in which His name is called upon, to pollute it?" Jer. vii. 30. Is He not a jealous God? Jealous of His honour and glory? How will He be pleased to see Satan's temples more respected by heathens and unbelievers than His own churches by Christians? Wherefore, (1.) "The Lord is in His holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before Him," Hab. ii. 20. (2.) "But as for me, in the multitude of Thy mercy I will come into Thy house; I will worship towards Thy holy temple in Thy fear," Ps. v. 8. (3.) "Woe to you, . . . ye great men, heads of the people, that go in with state into the house of Israel," Amos, vi. 1. Remember the Pharisee and the publican. (4.) "How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord," Ps. lxxxiii. 1.

END OF FIRST VOLUME OF THE DEVOUT CHRISTIAN.

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